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PREFACE

Written on yellowish manuscripts or in old books, world, famous scholars left behind testimonies, proving that the wandering Jews, following the footsteps of a humanity in full movement, had imprinted the history of mankind and its struggle for survival on the sand of time.

This could be taken into consideration as long as we keep in mind that in the last two hundred years, millions of people headed toward the Americas. As a consequence, the New World became the center of gravity of contemporary world history.

During that period, Europe - especially its Eastern half - was faced by cyclic outbursts of violence generated by enraged nationalism and anti-Semitism, destroying its people through wars, revolutions, pogroms, and their likeness. Only the brave and skilled found escape through migration. They settled permanently in the Untied States, building a new life in this land so rightly called "of liberty."

Non-Jews arriving at the beginning of the twentieth century mainly from Eastern Europe, kept alive and cherished the ties with the old country, which to them was like a stepmother with little love in her heart, and a lot of contempt for people who were not part of their "blessed" throng. Those "poor people" preserved the "mother country" in their soul, by speaking her language and practicing her customs.

But for many Jews the love for, and fond memories of the land left behind, were overshadowed by the sufferings and discriminations. What was but a dream for their ancestors, for

these emigrants it was an achieved goal. Their offsprings later came to cherish these very stories of struggle for freedom. This generation of emigrants wandered from place to place until they were able to reach this land which for them was not only the end of a road, but also the fulfillment of a dream.

The situation of Jews was peculiar, taking into consideration that they migrated at the same time with other nationalities among whom they lived, but were permanently separated by a wall of rejections.

Although practicing some of the traditions pertinent to the land or speaking its language, the bonds with the people from the old countries were never the same. The Jews left behind their dear ones, hoping that one day they will be able to tell them to pack their bundles and join them, rebuilding once more the shattered nuclei of their families. Arriving at their final destination, the Jews -- thanks to the skills and professions acquired in the old country, became shortly mostly employed townspeople.

Interesting is the fact that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when people from Western and Northern parts of Europe were leaving their places of birth, sailing for the United States, the Jews were settling in Western Europe. After a millennium of wandering in the Asiatic-European countries, they realized that those Western countries, which were much more civilized and developed, had a small Jewish population. The migration toward France, England, the Scandinavian states etc. started a reverse movement after the Jews were expelled from those lands centuries earlier. For most of them this was the last stop

before the final leap over the Atlantic Ocean, in their endeavor to reach the New World.

The pogroms in Russia during 1880, 1881 and 1882, were powerful warnings for the Romanian Jews that the time to start tying their bundles had arrived. The internal events in Romania, and the legislation enforced against this community, made emigration a goal, which -- by all means-- should be reached.

On the world maps, two countries became relevant for the Jewish immigration: Palestine and the United States. This migration brought millions of Jews to America, and hundreds of thousands to Eretz Israel. Besides all misfortunes that later on befell the Jewish communities in Europe, The United States and Palestine were the only countries, albeit all limitations, that kept the lines of emigration open.

Among this kaleidoscope of people dressed in peculiar garb, Yeshivoth students, merchants, artisans and intellectuals, could also be found Romanian Jews.

They started to make a pathway in a world which began to forget the joy of speaking the language of their ancestors, the old and much used vehicle of communication: the Yiddish language. Sometimes they even felt embarrassment speaking it.

The Jews arriving from Eastern Europe to America, especially in the second part of the nineteenth century, kept alive the recollections of the centers of Judaism. They started building new ones according to the trend of the spiritual life developed here. After long years of migration, the Jews in their flight from Europe followed by the destruction of the large and powerful

centers of Poland, the Baltic States, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. They tried to bridge the distance that separated them from the older settlers by speaking the common language as much as they were able to do it. From the beginning it was some relief, but those Jews arriving from godforsaken places realized soon that they were talking with people they hardly understood. What represented once the bonds that kept those people together, was their language which transcended boundaries and geographical meridians. A solidarity and unity was created which leveled hardships succeeding often to help each other in moments of distress. But this was long gone. The language of the ghetto became just memory; the old immigrants already learned the language of their adoptive country; the newcomers felt like outsiders left out in the cold. What happened between an old immigrant and a just arrived greenhorn, was like a dialogue among deaf.

Arriving in a Jewish community settled a long time ago at these places, the newcomers started at once to participate in the life and habits of this specific congregation. They agreed to become a part of the flock who needed them too, at least for the normal function of daily life, starting with the necessity of completing a *minyan*. The new settlers looked for their brethren, especially when they began to feel the burden of old age pressing on their shoulders, reminding them that the time had come to prepare for a proper burial.

The anti-Semitic movement in Romania started to take significant proportions, although the dimensions and the

brutalities were not always the same. But the system of legislation chained every movement for all the Jews. A large variety of orders and laws, started with the expulsion of the Jewish population from the villages, the interdiction of attending public schools, etc. In the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century, those social, economical, and political restrictions were so severe that when Franklin Peixotto the first ambassador to Romania with title of Consul General of the United States was ready to leave for assignment, President Ulysses Grant said to the young diplomat: "the reports concerning the sufferings of the Romanian Jews deeply stir our human sentiments. That which reaches us from Romania is a chain of malice and brutality without measure."

It should not be assumed that all Jews from Romania were treated equally. Jews with positions in the economical fields, industrial properties, and institutions with powerful connections in the country and abroad, enjoyed certain liberties. As a matter of fact it was a sort of tolerance of mutual and reciprocal interest. Such relations were kept alive for as long as it was necessary.

Capitalism created new sources of income, but not for everybody. After the great and persistent expulsion of the Jews from the villages, some of the peasants started to learn a trade or a skill in order to be able to find a job in the urban economy. Enterprises built in the cities and developed by the Jews became an open market for those destitute people, and the only place to

work. This internal migration of people toiling the land drained quickly those openings.

The Romanian population from the Austro-Hungarian Empire with a higher standard of living than their brethren from the Old Kingdom, left their places, running away from the social conditions and especially from the nationalist discrimination. What should be understood is that in the same period of time when Jews from Romania used any opportunity to migrate, they were helped by other fellow Jews still in the country, or by special organizations from Europe and America founded mainly for this goal. But the Romanian peasantry did not have any material resources to migrate, and there was nowhere a stretched out hand to help them. Nobody was interested to get rid of these cheap, silent, and obedient working masses.

The large number of people coming from the villages into the cities looking for work, took jobs as unskilled laborers.
Later, their children and a large part of the middle class, attended professional schools, and, becoming more dynamic, they were searching for a position in the city's life. They were taught, and later on they taught others that: "the goods of the country are stolen by the immigrant Jews."

The state policy to support the Gentiles by robbing the Jews of their assets increased year after year. The Jewish emigration became the main topic on the government's agenda. It was also a hot debate for a large segment of the population who hoped to replace those Jewish owners. Over the years, and under heavy pressures, the Jewish economical and industrial establishments had

to include in their Board of Directors or other chairmanship positions, high ranking Gentiles. Those new leaders -- by decree -- kept waving the flags of nationalism, making sure that this will be enough to make Jews understand their position and chances in the Romanian society. The second part of the nineteenth century shook those dormant Jewish masses from their lethargy, forcing them to emigrate. This could be accomplished due to the help received from the earlier echelons of emigrants that subsidized the latter wave of newcomers. Gone was the time when young husbands, sons, brothers, etc. left home heading towards America, hoping that one day they will be able to send back money to buy travel tickets, to reunite with their families. At the end of the nineteenth century, most arrived in the United States as an extended family of emigrants. Under those circumstances, it is safe to say that the new waves of emigration from Romania including a large number of unskilled, lower middle class people without, or with, very little capital who started to organize in the United States their peddler sort of trade following the pattern of the old countries. In a pamphlet published in 1787 in Leipzig-Germany, an anonymous author is analyzing the social and economical position of those tradesmen in the society of the time: "... the great part of them(the peddlers) spent almost their work life on the highways in the pursuit of retail business, and the trader spent for his own person nothing but a herring and a penny loaf(of bread); the nearest brook or well had to supply his drink. . . in order to bring home on Friday (some money) to supply food

and clothing for wife and children." This picture is a powerful one, regarding the life and work of those poor people.

Meanwhile, in 1884 by a special law the Romanian government had forbidden the Jewish peddlers to earn their meager loaf of bread. They were afraid that they would jeopardize a trade, exercised by Gentiles as well.

The ones owning a steady trade were expelled from the villages, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century these orders became a permanent and brutal way of making these people's life more miserable. The peddlers were chased like wild animals.

Jews emigrating from Romania represented a large part of the total number of Jews arriving to America. Besides, among them was a significant percentage of unskilled people as well as a large number of well trained professionals who later became educated and specialized in America. These people were crucial in establishing a powerful community. The intellectuals educated among the dull walls of the Talmud Torahs or Yeshivoth started to learn English while their children flooded the universities and colleges. This transition from the slums or the ghettos toward the newly built communities and educational systems was a victory that resulted in benefits for both the Jews and the new country.

The Jewish immigrants arriving at these shores were profoundly committed to settle for good. But the non-Jewish immigrants, with strong links to their countries, left home with the purpose of making money and later eventually returning to their homeland. The Jewish immigrants from Romania had little reason to look back toward the place, which used to be their

fatherland. At the beginning some had difficulties with their adaptation: finding a job; conversing with people. This immense human kaleidoscope with its centrifugal power of rotating permanently around them; the sound of voices and the Babylonian cacophony of dialects and tongues; the taste of food which harmed their palate, their lack of skill and chance to approach and learn a trade, was painful.

At times it seemed unbearable to deal with these burdening emotions. Being aware of their shortcomings, and feeling sorry for themselves, they started to look back to the old country, trying to estimate their chances of return. They realized that going back was too complicated a task which not only required money for the journey, but also a certain capital in order to enable them to start a new trade amid their old fellows. The idea of return as a looser was hard to bear! Some, without other choice, swallowed their pride, trying not to pay attention to the shattering reality. Back "at home" they encountered the same anti-Semitism well preserved and ready to be thrown into their faces. The newspapers started to publish incendiary articles: "The Jews are returning!" The same old discriminatory legislation still in place, new ones released with a blend of actuality contended meager and limited possibilities for earning a living. Facing reality, those Jews -- or some of them - hit the road back. A new try, a new chance, to be challenged! "If others could do it, I can do it too!" The old dream of looking toward America as the "Goldene Medina" (The Golden Country) did not fade away. Those

Jews succeeded at last to find a place in the New World. Others failed again and resettled in Romania for good.

The period of time after WWI was of great economic success. Those immigrants known as good and skilled laborers, or after receiving a new training, were able to keep themselves employed, and after a while were even ready to help their dear ones still living in the old country. After WWII the Jewish migration took another dimension. It was then that the contribution of the Jewish intellectuals coming from all over the world was appreciated. Their arrival in the United States contributed to the development of the war machine and the reconstruction of the country after the war.

We must stress the fact that some of those re-immigrants, people who chose to go back and stay for good in Romania, brought with them their children born in the United States during their stay in this country. After WWII, the American Embassies developed a large search in order to find out where those children -- at the time already grown up individuals -- were. Being virtually American citizens, they were dressed properly, fed, provided with tickets for their journey toward the country where their parents didn't have the courage to stay, struggle and overcome the inherent hardships of the beginning.

Starting after WWII, the immigration to Palestine took a massive character. The generation of Halutzim (pioneers), those young and wonderful idealists, leaving their old places of birth, started to build in Eretz Israel the "Old New Land" dreamed by

Theodore Herzl. Palestine became in the harsh years of war the only place in the world were Jews were welcomed.

The crossroads of Jewish migration, as a result of their national movement, became characteristic of the desire to find a niche were to live in freedom in this turbulent world.

Emigration which has been at times a massive displacement of population had been reduced to a trickle in the Romania of today. Its numbers were never as important as was the pressure exercised against the Jewish population to persuade its members to leave, thus allowing the Romanian people to rid their soil of an "unworthy population."

Yes, anti-Semitism is still alive and well in Romania. The tragedy is that Jews who remained there after WWII believed that the phenomenon was buried forever under the burned walls of the desecrated synagogue in Bucharest during the pogrom of January 1941; under the pile of corpses in the "death trains" from Iasi: in the dreadful (concentration camps) of Transnistria. They believed that the ideology of hatred would disappear, covered under the rubble of history. But they were fooled again. Anti-Semitism still virulently displays it's poison in newspapers, magazines and television; all of this after a revolution carried on in the name of democracy.

Even the actuality of the Holocaust in Romania is contested, following the "logic" that if there was no Holocaust, then there were no "victims" and there are no "survivors". Some suggest a compromise: "It is true that there were victims, but not so many. And if there were many, they were not killed by the Romanians. By

all means, not by the Romanians. By the Germans or Hungarians perhaps. Yes, they killed them but not the Romanians."

But where are the Jews? Did they disappear into the thin air? At the beginning of the war there were around 750,000 Jews in Romania, and after the war only about 430,000 remained. Where are the rest of them? Just look around: where are they? There is reliable data, and one has only to look into the figures, documents, and talk with survivors to discover the truth. And what about the testimonies? They are still there. Just listen to the voices that are fading away on those old tape records. The tragedy is in the continued denial that the Holocaust occurred. It is from that point that the post-war campaign of hatred began.

At first I thought hearing some voices in Romania speaking of justice and truth. Then, like other Jews, I began to look inside myself for a solution. What could we do to rid ourselves of the humiliation, and escape from the iron cage that made a misery of our existence? Give up our dignity as human beings? The price was too high, and had been paid already with the piles of bodies. Give up our identity as Jews? That price was far too high. It was paid with blood and tears. Face reality and act accordingly? That was a solution, with a price we could pay. So we tied up our bundles and headed toward the borders, with multiple goals, but all with a common desire: to escape discrimination!

Writing about this little known part of history, I have tried to create a synthesis of facts and events, in which the truth is presented with responsibility and honesty. Unlike my previous books: "The Silent Holocaust -- Romania and its Jews" and "Waiting

for Jerusalem" -- Surviving the Holocaust in Romania, this volume is not entirely a chronology of facts, but in part an examination of the pressures that made the survivors of the Holocaust, leave Romania. It is important that emigration -- as a social factor -- had been present in the life of this community over a long span of time. It is true that whenever there has been a period characterized by an increase of anti-Semitic outbursts, it has been followed by a new wave of emigration. Always considered a last resort, it was used to escape unbearable discriminatory measures. It was the protest of a community whose members were treated as outcasts, in a society that rejected them.

Like an awakening was the realization that people were living a contorted existence based on opportunism and lack of sincerity.

Dignity and self-esteem were being left aside. They had become a world of illusions and unfulfilled dreams in which everyone behaved as if squeezed dry of human feelings and overwhelmed by fear. Prudence in social relations, censorship of the written word, speaking in whispers, hiding ones' private thoughts, having one's behavior and work watched; all brought such a state of despair that people began to look around and plan how to escape the nightmare.

This social phenomenon of standing tall in a steadfast decision to emigrate is only a part of a complex knot of problems that have not been fully explained. In discussing them, I am closing my trilogy on the life of Jews in Romania, having written on the Holocaust, the Salvation, and now including the Emigration.

I.C. Butnaru

Chapter 1

EMIGRATION: HISTORICAL RECOLLECTIONS.

The history of the Jews of Romania has not been written; nor will it be written in the near future. No chronicles or accounts of any kind have been handed down by earlier or contemporary generations. It was only with some difficulty that few Hebrew documents of secondary importance of comparatively recent date, were brought to light. This strange condition is without doubt due to numberless scourges with which the country was afflicted: endless wars between neighboring powers, internal feuds, periodic invasions, recurring conflagrations, which destroyed whole cities one after another, famine and plague, and above all, the intolerable exactions of the Princes and the boyars who forced whole parts of the population to seek refuge in the forests and the mountains. Sometimes the well-to-do looked for refuge in neighboring countries.

The question arises how the Jews could continue to exist in this country, facing so many hardships? But for the inherent tenacity of the race and the comparative tolerance sometimes enjoyed, they must certainly have given way.

The Romanian chroniclers, dealing solely with wars and intestine conflicts, and with the relation of the Prince boyars, paid no attention to the Jews, and hardly mentioned them in certain passages. In the life of the Jewish population, there were two distinct periods which put a specific mark on the existence of those people.

First, the period of immigration which started and continued in a slow pace over the years, with its ups and downs, paid with heavy sufferings. The nineteenth century was the crucial moment when the life of Jews changed considerably, and the second part of their existence started: the emigration.

It is an established fact that many Jews followed the Roman legions in their triumphal march across the continent, as soldiers or purveyors to the army, and they settled in the countries favorable to their trade. Moreover, Jews had lived in places scattered along the shore of the Black Sea a long time before the Christian era, and after the dispersion, their number increased. According to some historians, Jews lived in Romanian territory as early as the time of the Dacians. Their place of residence was the city of Talmus or Talmaci on the border of Transylvania, known under the name of the Rotethurm (Turnul Rosu). Gradually the Jews penetrated into the interior of the country. Some of the coast cities later formed an integral part of Wallachia and Moldavia. The Jews lived in the banat (domain) of Severin, which was then under Hungarian sovereignty.

When Tugomir Basarab known as Radu Negru crossed the Carpathians in search of a new country and founded Wallachia in 1290, he was followed by a large number of Romanians and other nationalities, among them, Jews. Another immigration into Wallachia took place at the beginning of the reign of Vladislav Basarab, between 1365 and 1367, when they were expelled from Hungary by Louis the Great. Many of them came to Wallachia and were well received by Vladislav, who assigned to them the town of

Turnu (Severin). According to some historians, Turnu was built by the Jews. They made it a commercial center from which they reached all Danubian countries.

When the principality of Moldavia was founded (1348 or 1349), Jews were already living there, at least in certain localities. When Roman I (1391-1394) founded the city bearing his name, Jews took up their abode in it, doubtless the first to do so. Roman I, and his son Alexander the Good (1401-1433) issued decrees permitting the Jews of Roman and the rest of the country to settle wherever they choose, and to pursue any sort of trade or industry.

The reign of Vlad Tzepesh (the Impaler)(1456-1462) in Wallachia was particularly grim. During his second reign (1476) he seized Turkish Jews coming to the country on business, imprisoned them and demanded their fortunes as ransom. The Moldovian Princes displayed more wisdom and treated the Jews favorably. Under Stephen the Great (1457-1504) they traded freely, even in Suceava, the capital of the principality, where they made large profits as cattle dealers. They also negotiated the ransom of captive Christians, and rendered many services to the Prince, whose reign was a constant warfare against the neighboring peoples. It is probable that many Jews settled in Moldavia in 1498, when Stephen, after his incursion into Poland, carried away with him one hundred thousand prisoners in order to establish them in his own country. The treaty of commerce with the King of Poland, in April 1499, expressly stipulated that the traders should be allowed to carry on freely in both countries. Commerce with Turkey was extended, and the Jews from Constantinople and other places frequently

visited the Principalities. Many established themselves there permanently. But the situation of the Jews varied with the reigning Prince, and depended upon the favor that he obtained from the influential Jews in Constantinople.

In Moldavia, Bogdan (1504-1517) following in the footsteps of his father, treated the Jews kindly; but his successor Stephen the Young, accorded privileges to Christian merchants of Lemberg, contrary to the Jews, whose influence he wished to weaken (1522). Petru Raresh was driven from his throne: he was helped to it again in 1541, by a Jewess, very close to the mother of the Sultan, who even advanced him a large amount of money. This did not prevent him from seizing the horses of Jewish traders, and his successors did not fail to imitate him in this respect whenever they were short of money.

The exactions of Alexander Lapusneanu (1552-1561) a cruel tyrant, were so severe that the Jews danced with joy when he was dethroned by Jacob Heraklides. Peter the Lame pitilessly exploited all the inhabitants, and did not spare the Jews. He put a heavy tax upon the wines transported through Moldavia(1578),the trade which was for the greater part in the hands of the Jews; and in order to rid himself of the Jewish cattle dealers from Poland, he decreed their expulsion from the country.

There is little information concerning the Jews of Wallachia during this time. The secretary of Alexander Mircha (1567-1577) was Isaiah Ben Joseph, whom he dismissed, probably in 1573 in consequence of intrigues. Isaiah ben Joseph then entered the service of John the Terrible in Moldavia, who helped the Jews from

this province when the bishop of Roman ordered that the Jews should be burned in the cemetery on Purim 1574. The end of the sixteenth century was marked by massacres of Jews in the two principalities. The Princes of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania joined together under Austrian influence. In 1594 Michael the Brave of Wallachia assembled his money lenders, Turks, Greeks, and Jews, and had them all massacred; then he informed certain individuals that they would all be released from their debts. This was the signal for a general slaughter of Turks and Jews. The entire community of Bucharest perished. Under the successors of Michael the Brave, the Jews returned to Wallachia and led a quiet life; but they were far from the number and importance of the Jews of Moldavia. In this province the reign of Basil the Wolf (1634-1663) was favorable to the Jews; and they probably would have been happy but the insurrection of the Cossacks against the Poles, changed their life too. Basil the Wolf kept in close touch with Constantinople. In his career he seems to have some connections with Dr. Cohen who in 1660 was sent by the Sultana Gate to Moldavia, in order to negotiate peace with the King of Sweden. The Code decreed by Basil the Wolf shows that a considerable degree of protection was accorded to the Jews.

In Wallachia, Mathew Basarab (1633-1654) encouraged the baptizing of the Jews, and conferred high dignities to the converted. One of them was appointed Chancellor of the Court. The Codes which he decreed in 1640 and 1652 were not favorable to the Jews, except in the part inspired by the Code of Basil the Wolf. The Jew was treated like a leper, or as pest-ridden. No one might

approach him, or come in contact with him, or sit with him at the same table. Under Constantine Brancoveanu (1689-1714), a Jew surnamed the "Powder Maker" gave the Prince gun powder for the army.

The Russian and the Polish Jews continuously traveled the routes leading to Turkey across the country. They traded in cattle, horses, honey and wine, imported manufactured articles from Germany and also formed large estates.

The whole seventeenth century was characterized by the presence on the throne of Wallachia and Moldavia with Princes trying to make a good living and big fortune, stripping the Jews to their bones. In case of failure, those people were arrested and beaten to death. The Russo-Turkish war brought sad times to the Jews of the principalities. After slaughtering the Jews of Uman, the Cossacks advanced as far as Balta and asked for the Polish Jews who had taken refuge there. When the Turkish garrison refused to give up, the Cossacks murdered the garrison along with the Jewish population. The Russians entered Moldavia and the Russian and Turkish soldiers worked hand in hand in making executions and pilferings. At Botosani the Rabbi fell victim to their brutality. Commerce stopped, and the traders were heavily burdened with taxes. In Moldavia, the Jews were subjected to fewer vexations. Nevertheless, Alexander Kallimachos in 1796 expelled from their shops the Jews who lived near the churches. At Galatz the never-dying accusation of ritual murder was made again in 1797. The Jews escaped entire destruction only through an old priest who got them together, and sheltered them in the church.

The 19th century opened its doors to new oppressions and disturbances against the Jews. The new enthronement of Alexander Moruzzi in Wallachia brought new attacks against the Jews, this time at another scale: in Bucharest enjoying the new ruler, the populace assaulted the Jews killing 128 on April 8,1801. And the list started to grow.

In 1804, Constantine Ypsilanti was forced to address a rescript to the Metropolitan, requesting him to draw up an encyclical which the priests should read from the pulpit, proclaiming that the charge of ritual murder is false, that the Jewish law permits no such practices, and that the accusation is an invention of the rubble, seeking a mere pretext to plunder houses of the Jews. This accusation however did not cease in Wallachia. In 1808, the Metropolitan was again forced to protest it; in 1811 a Jew of the district of Jalomitza was imprisoned on a similar charge; and in 1815 an abortive attempt was made at Ploesti.

In 1821, a tremendous storm broke out, bringing mortal terror to the Jews in Romania. It was the time of the Greek Revolution that fought to escape from the Turkish domination. Besides some brilliant youths who formed the ranks of the insurgents, the rest were the scum of humanity, who were forced into service. They were undisciplined bunches (gangs) of plunderers and gallow-birds who stole, sowed destruction, and pilfered the Jewish houses. The entrance of the Turks put a stop to the carnage; but then the Turks and the Janissaries took their turn in storming. The Jews lived in a constant state of dread; terror reigned in the two

countries, especially in Moldavia. The well-to-do crossed the border; the poor wandered in the forests and in the mountains. The city of Iasi was converted in a furnace of living coals before the departure of the Janissaries in August 1822.

The reign of John Alexander Sturdza in Moldavia (1822-1828) was characterized by indecision. He treated the Jews according to the impulse of the moment, sometimes well, then again badly. Later on, in 1848, the revolution that overturned several thrones in Europe, swept over Wallachia too. The Jews contributed to the cause in different ways, giving up their fortunes to help the revolutionaries.

It is still an open question whether the reign of John Alexander Cuza (1859-1866), the first Prince of the United Principalities, was really favorable to the Jews. Some actions and decrees were indeed released in this direction.

In the meantime, the organization of the Jews in Romania deserves special attention. The office of Hahambashi (Chief Rabbi) was not hereditary; it stayed with some slight interruption in the hands of one family. In the year of 1832, this office was abolished, and the commune Jewish life was under the leadership of Rabbis elected by the Prince of the land.

During the troubled course of history, the Jews lived a hand-to-mouth existence. The epitaphs in old cemeteries showed the existence of scholars, rabbis, and Dayanim. But those scarce writings prove nothing regarding the works of people of great education and culture. There can be no question of Jewish literature in the Romanian language during the middle ages, due to

the fact that the Romanian literature itself consisted of little more than edited chronicles, or religious and popular works, most of which are of quite recent origin. Jewish authors writing in Hebrew who were native of Romania or lived there from early youth, do not appear until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. These were poets and prose writers, and some displayed a fair amount of originality, handling the Hebrew language with elegance. The first Jew who took a place in general Romanian literature was Dr. Julius Barash: he created a scientific Romanian language and popularized the sciences for the Romanians.

Researchers concerning Jewish literature in Romania were few. What was done there are not works of special values, done by skillful chroniclers and do not cover a large area of works, or a thorough analysis of the period, the social conditions and especially the specific life of the Jewish communities. Those who engaged in this kind of work were rabbis, few of them remarkable personalities. Only two may be mentioned as great scholars: Jacob ibn Arvani of Iasi, described as a profound cabbalist and skillful physician by Joseph del Medigo who visited Iasi. And, Nathan Hanover, rabbi in Focsani and Iasi, author of "Javan Mezula" an excellent trustworthy document on the sufferings of the Jews during the Cossack insurrection.

The best writers on folklore and on the Romanian philology were Jews from the beginning. For example, Joseph Brociner is the first Jewish poet who wrote in the Romanian language; and Ronetti Roman is- according to some literary critics- the most gifted of all Romanian poets. His poem "Radu" gives him rank among the best

poets. His play "Manasse" is until now one of the most profound dramas in the literary creations of its kind. After so many years, the poem "Radu" was never re-published, and is totally unknown to generations of Romanian intellectuals. After those gifted writers who used the Romanian language as a vehicle to communicate with the mass of readers, the list started to grow year after year. Just a few to be remembered, to help the reader of some directions in order to have a better image of the contribution of Jews to enlarge the cultural field of Romanian culture: Cilibi Moise, a peddler by profession, and a born talent, traveled all over Wallachia through cities, villages and especially fairs. Listening to the people, he was able to write aphorisms of a wonderful value, being until nowadays unique in his talent. Mauriciu Cohen-Lanaru was one of the first composers who wrote music for operas and musicals using melodies from the rich folklore of the Romanian people, being in the same time a translator in the French language of the poems of Vasile Alecsandri. Benedetto Franchetti, after he fought under Garibaldi in the Italian revolution, settled in Bucharest where with Flechtenmacher and L. Wiest put the corner stone of the contemporary musical life in Romania. The banker Mauriciu Blank invested great sums of money, or financed Romanian contractors ready to invest and develop the Romanian industry.

Approaching the 20th century, Jews could be found in all domains of arts, literature, commerce and industry, and their part in the development of the country was undoubtable. The Jewish-Romanian literature is almost exclusively represented by the "Annuarul pentru Israeliti" (yearbook for Israelites), mainly

literary in character, under the editorship of Moses Schwartzfeld. Homiletics is represented by Dr. M. Beck; Talmudic exegesis by Dr. C. Lippe; and Romanian and Jewish folklore by Dr. M. Gaster. M. Schawartzfeld has published essays, but he was chiefly busy with biographical studies. Dr. Elias Schwartzfeld was the first writer of Romanian Jewish novels. The scope (aim, purpose) of his tales is to describe the soul and the manners of the Romanian Jew, and they aim at presenting the persecutions and scenes of the past. S. Janovich published short stories about the Jewish family; among them was Jacob Posmantir author of a Judeo-German book. It is a history drawn from second-rate sources, and containing some notes about the Jews. Joseph Kaufman has published studies on the Jewish communities of Piatra Neamt, Tg, Neamtz and Roman; The traditions collected by him are of great interest. Jewish journalism extends back as far as 1856 when the first Judeo-German newspaper appeared at Iasi. Among the journalists of great prestige were: brothers Adolph and Leopold Stern, Julius Schein, A.S. Gold, Sam Cerbu and many others. The path of modern Jewish journalism in Romania was opened by the brothers Moses and Elias Schwartzfeld.

The reign of Prince Carol, later King of Romania (1866-1914) had an unfortunate beginning. The Capital gave him a brilliant reception, but very soon presented to him the spectacle of a riot against the Jews. An Assembly had been convened to confer a Constitution. The rough draft submitted by the government stated in the Article 6, that "religion is not an obstacle to naturalization." It added: "With regard to the Jews, a special law

will determine their admission to naturalization and also to civil rights."

This article was irrelevant; the question had been settled in the Civil Code. But the government wished to draw the attention of the anti-Semites to this fact, so that they might demand abrogation. The purpose was more than accomplished; the supporters of the government formed organized mobs and attacked the Jews on their way to the recently erected synagogue. They demolished it, and desecrated the holy precincts. It was June 30, 1866. The government withdrew Article 6, and put to the vote Article 7, which stated that: "only aliens of Christian persuasion can obtain naturalization."

From the Romanian cities the Jews were already banished. Soon they were to be placed beyond the law too. Ion Bratianu called to absolute power, ransacked the archives in order to bring to light the ancient circulars and decrees promulgated against the Jews in the two principalities. He brought them into force again, and the Jew-hunt began. Jewish inns were shut down; prefects, sub-prefects, and mayors took measures for the wholesale expulsion of the Jews from the villages. Atrocities were committed: with the butt-end of muskets and at the point of the bayonet, men, women and children were cruelly driven from their homes. In the towns the Jews were brutally seized by the police and the agents of the law, caught with a lasso, abused, and imprisoned. Some were chased out of the country, others were condemned by the courts as vagrants. Although Romanian subjects, they were forced across the

Danube, and as Turkey refused to accept them, they drowned in the river.

This Barbarian conduct shocked the whole Europe. Energic remonstrances were addressed to the Romanian government, and Bratianu was dismissed. Thousands of Jewish families forfeited their livelihood. The Powers wrote protest notes, but Bratianu shortly had resumed the leadership. The situation of the Jews was lamentable. It was the eve of the Russo-Turkish war!

After the war, in 1878, The European Powers were summoned for the purpose of recasting the Treaty of San Stefano. The opportunity was seized to settle the Jewish question in Romania. The Congress of Berlin proclaimed the equality of all creeds before the law. Ignoring the Romanian affairs, and the duplicity of Romanian statesmen, the diplomats of Europe and the Jews of foreign countries openly rejoiced. They were soon brought to moderate their exultation. Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin will ever remain a monument of human fatuity enforcing abstract formulas of the law, without research and knowledge of men and things. Article 44 called forth indignant outcries in the Romanian press. Fists were clenched, and the Jews of the land were threatened with general slaughter. Article 7 was stroked out from the Constitution. Thenceforth Romania had no Jews, but only <u>aliens not subject to alien protection.</u> -pariahs, vagabonds, the targets of any passer-by.

The persecution of the Jews takes every possible form; it shows itself everywhere. It appeared in the restrictive laws; incited on the legislative chambers by the ministers of the

cabinet; frankly directed by the bodies corporate of the departments and the communes, by the police, by the administrators of justice, by the army, by the teachers and professors, and by ordinary private individuals. Everybody tracks the Jews, and woe to the Jew who defends himself. A shameless traffic had established itself; some of the deputies opened shop, and naturalization was granted only to such Jews who paid down cash. However, the mere withholding of naturalization from the Jews was not enough. It was necessary to render their life so bitter, to disgust them forever with Romanian citizenship and land. So-called economic societies were formed of private individuals with the object of embittering the life of the Jews and eliminating them from the country. In 1880, restrictive laws scanned gradually, all the occupations in the hands of the Jews; there were political rights, which only Romanians by birth and nationality may exercise. "If the air is not turned into a monopoly, and bottled for the exclusive use of Romanians and Christians, it is because Romanian statesmen, in spite of their ingenuity, have not yet invented the means of doing it," wrote with bitterness Dr. Elias Schwartzfeld in his outstanding study regarding Jewish existence in Romania.

With his shrewdness and his political wisdom, I.C. Bratianu understood at an earlier stage the complicated process of decay that shattered the rural economy. In the meantime, some signs of social revival appeared in the peasant world. He used both of them by creating an artificial problem, well known under the denomination of "The Jewish Question." This problem which

generated a virulent anti-Semitism constituted for many years the climax needed by the uppercrust of the leading aristocracy in trying to marginalize the Jews from the direct participation in the development of the country.

By the foundation of the peasantry banking system, the so called "Banks of the Rural Credit" almost the whole financial banking organizations were ruled and managed by the Liberal Party-Bratianu pushed with his economic policy the feudal owners to continue their slowly but steady grinding, succeeding in this way to transfer their wealth to his political cronies. Thanks to their boiling energy, dedication and burning desire to become part and parcel of the uppercrust, the new bourgeoisie was able to impose to the oligarchy a shift of the state administration from their weak hands, into the agile hands of the new social class.

They already monopolized the "love of the country"; the "patriotism"; "the old bounds with the forebearers"; "the love of traditions"; being the most devoted "flagbearers of nationalism"; the only "knowledgeable of Romanian language and literature". Paradoxically, the so called "Jewish Problem," by definition a city problem, because Jews used to dwell there, became a village problem, this being the place where the Jews were not allowed to settle down anymore. Despite their insignificant number, the Jews living in this geographical perimeter were always made responsible for the subhuman life conditions in which the peasantry was kept. In this way, the farmers started to play an important role in the disturbances which followed over the years. It was an obedient "mass of manoeuver," perfectly fitted for the aristocracy's

political needs. The city bourgeoisie comprised by heterogeneous elements belonging to various minorities and branches of Christianity, was totally different from the traditional feudalism fettered to the soil. They were mostly intellectuals, so called freelance professionals. Always in a perpetuum move, they cleared their way into political life with energy and lack of scruples. Together with them, were land owners concerned mostly for their unpaid debts, due to the low prices of the crop of last year; attorneys with sharp tongues but seasoned speakers always ready to offer their love for everything that had a certain price. They advertised themselves as the only enlightened offspring of the people, changing their beliefs according to the columns published in a media always looking for everything that could be sold with a certain profit.

The second social category was represented by Jews. Being aware of their place in the inner fiber of the Romanian society, they were always ready to receive and openly accept all kinds of calumnies, by lack of means to rebuke them. The Jews living in Romania never represented a "danger" for anybody. People hardly making a living by employing their skills, were pushed at the fringes of the society. Among them, were some 1000-1500 educated Jews, people toiling on their intellectual professions, aware of their limits of being accepted among the higher class of society. The Jews, according to the official propaganda were "plotting" to "penetrate" and destroy from "inside" the homegrown aristocracy and its subservient acolytes. Those people were always ready to

draw attention just by raising their mended flags of nationalism and anti-Semitism.

The aristocracy, the rich landowners, factory proprietors real estate owners, were always in open clash with middle class, among which the Jews never had their place. The struggle was fierce and holding fast for a long time. The upper class's later victory over this part of bourgeoisie was overwhelming, although the late were on their way in a full swing to climb the social ladder. This was the main reason why the upper class didn't like the impetuosity with which those "nouveaux riches" were unfolding around, looking for a comfortable place in the higher stratum of society.

The government policy at the time was against those bourgeois elements and Jews alike, having the same goal in mind, but using different ways of applying it. The basic difference between those two social classes should be distinctively and especially the results. What would be kept in mind is the fact that against the Jews, individuals or whole communities, any laws, decrees, or discriminatory instructions could be easily issued with power of law, all meant to circumvent their existence. The Romanians enjoyed all rights given by the law; the big landowner and the poor peasant had the same rights. At least that was what everybody said and liked to believe it was a reality.

The "miracle" which changed the Romanian bourgeoisie into a powerful social class, but totally subservient to the aristocracy, was the fact that those people, living a colorless existence, sometimes hardly making ends meet, thanks to the uppercrust's

push, performed a real somersault from the chairs of mediocrity to the comfortable armchairs of leadership. The whole political structure became suddenly very pleasant, and everybody agreed to line up and follow the flag. Everybody tried hard to bent from the waist down in order to catch and swallow for himself a piece of the sweet pie of power. In the internal structure of this new social class, the appreciation wasn't granted by difference of culture or social bounds, but by the job which brought them status, money and influence. The aristocracy bought- like a commodity- the middle class by bestowing it with positions in the state machinery, adding them like fixtures to their previous ownerships.

The place in the society of the Romanian merchant and artisan, was shifted by their own will to foreigners of all nationalities or religions who were welcomed with open arms in the country. Those people, besides their infusion of capital, brought with them well trained people who started to exercise professions badly needed by city dwellers and village peasantry. From the upper class point of view, those newcomers fitted perfectly to their interests. Being foreigners and subsequently without citizenship, they didn't have any claims to take an active part in the political arena. Their voice was subdued, being happy that they could care safely to their business. When necessity arose and for one "reason" or another diversion was needed, they harassed the Jews, to make their life much miserable. To get rid of them, was an everyday job. The Jews never dared to ask compensation or

at least an apology for their suffering, their stolen goods, or plundered hopes.

The Jewish bourgeoisie of all categories and social status, didn't have another choice but to pay. And, by all means, they paid. In those circumstances, with a stroke of a pen on one hand was "resolved" the life of those "village Jews" denying them the right to dwell in the countryside; and with the other hand, the landowners kept untouched the "monopoly" of exploiting the peasantry for those who possessed or rented the land and exercised the power to influence the life of the people they had under contract. In those times, the city bourgeoisie, taking care with a sharp eye to its assignments as public servants, followed obediently the orders received from the leaders of the country. The so-called "village bourgeoisie," those low level employees on the landowner estates, (priests, teachers, clerks in the mayoral offices, etc.) held tight to the state apparatus, mindful not to upset their boss, because of his good humor and spirit depended on the well being of their households. The political life remained for years the domain of those who owed power and wealth.

The anti-Semitism preached by the uppercrust was released from the bottle and applied always when internal and external political conditions were demanding. In this way, they could make sure that the Jewish problem, thanks to a long standing propaganda, was still alive and unsolved since ages. The main topic of the so called arguments against the Jew, was that this population didn't have the desire to assimilate and consequently unable to integrate with the rest of the population. Always viewed

as an outsider, the Jew was never totally accepted as belonging to the land. The Jewish population was labeled with an array of discriminatory epithets, but nothing, absolutely nothing, could be compared with the cruelty carried on by the orders of expulsion. Leaving the places they belonged to was referring solely to the person against whom the order was released. He or she had to leave the whole family behind. A return was out of question. All bridges were burned down. What should be kept in mind is the fact that those chosen to face the hard road of exile were always well known personalities, leaders in the cultural field, with strong ties and influence in Romanian and Jewish communities alike. The news regarding the expulsion was spread with the speed of a thunderbolt paralyzing life, and the desire to find an escape. To see a train stopping at certain railroad stations, where among other travelers journeying toward the border were those with burning eyes of despair under the watchful look of the guards was enough. The lesson delivered, the message understood. The Jews had to keep silent. Regardless of their previous work, their contribution brought to the nation by those so harshly punished, the measure of expulsion hung above the bent heads of this population, not just to scare them, but with the clear intention to behead them, once and for all.

Chapter 2

WHERE THE SUN STARTS RISING

The Jewish emigration from Romania has been the result of complex problems related to social, political, and economic circumstances which, slowly but steadily over many years, caused an important segment of the Jewish population to uproot itself and leave the country. Such emigration was always a last resort, and was considered the only avenue of escape from a bitter existence. In order to understand and evaluate the contemporary status of the Jews remaining in Romania, we must look back in history to discover what has transpired and how the Romanian treatment of its Jews influenced their determination to emigrate.

When considering, the so-called Jewish invasion of Romania from Russia and Austria, we have to keep in mind the conditions of the time. Bukovina, a part of Moldavia, was ceded in 1775 by the Turks to Austria according to the provisions of the Peace Treaty of Koutchouk Kainardgi. Bessarabia, another part of Moldavia was ceded to Russia by the Turks following the War of 1812 under provisions of the Peace Treaty of Bucharest. Until then, border crossing was hardly considered an issue. For centuries Christians and Jews alike had lived on the banks of the rivers Prut and Siret- both of which had suddenly become borders. Many who lived on one side of the river owned land or other property on the other side, thus crossing the river was a daily routine. When persecutions became heavy in Bessarabia under the Russians, some Jews did seek refuge in Moldavia where they had family, friends, or business associates. Thanks to treaties which they didn't

understand, and the shifting of borders as a consequence, they became aliens in the country to which they had always belonged. Some Jews from the German principalities, from Poland, or from Russia settled in Moldavia as well, but they were few in number and were mostly wealthy. Those who came from the ceded provinces were not people of means, but they were skilled, and most had professions and were ready to work and perform well at their jobs. Even one avowed anti-Semite had to admit that the Jews who settled there were hard working, thrifty people with good moral values.

The early 1820s were characterized by a steady influx of Jews who came to find shelter in a hospitable land at the invitation of Princes and great landowners who were concerned for the economic development of the country. They wanted a population that would establish new, small towns on the main roads in the vast unpopulated spaces between the cities and the peasant's villages, where landowners and peasants could sell their crops and purchase the manufactured goods needed in their households. They contributed greatly to the expansion of trade in those areas, initiated crafts, and were granted a form of citizenship, being termed "charter Jews", or citizens by decree. They were needed to settle the new market towns. And when they did that no one raised the issue of a Jewish problem.

A parliamentarian of the time, M. K. Epureanu, in a speech about the role played by the Jews in forming many of those small towns said: "How were those settlements founded? I was a witness because it happened that one of them was on our family property. Between the cities of Iasi and Vaslui, a distance of about one

hundred kilometers, lies the property about which I speak. The landlord thought to found a community there and asked a few Jews to come and settle. One was asked to be a baker, another a butcher, another an innkeeper, and another a shopkeeper. Most of the smaller towns in Moldavia were founded in this way. But, we have to look around to see what happened to them after thirty or forty years and see if they are still inhabited exclusively by Jews. The answer is no. In order to avoid the unpaid labor on the landlords' estates, peasants preferred to move to the cities or to those townlets- to start a trade, learn a craft, and open their own workshops. In some of the villages other kinds of shops were opened where the landlords or peasants could buy farm tools or goods for their homes. Banks were established to serve a new clientele. In these ways the small towns played an important role in the economic development of Moldavia. If you visited them, you could find there all kinds of craftsmen and shopkeepers, and even pharmacies and doctors. That is why they were founded." Following Epureanu on the floor, another parliamentarian, P.P. Carp, said: "...It is my firm belief that if we expel the Jews, instead of improving the economy we will return to our traditional laziness and go back to where we were fifty years ago."

At the same time as the policy of "open gates" was in effect, a long string of regulations were legislated to stop the free crossing of the borders -especially in Moldavia. On March 11, 1839 a decree was released stating that each Jew living in Moldavia had to pay a levy of sixty piasters. That was a large amount of money

for the time, and such a levy created a heavy burden for a poor population.

The year 1848 was an important one for the Romanian Jews because it brought the powerful impact of a wave of new thinking with a popular movement that hoped to move the Danubian Principalities from their unchanging routines. Young people, mainly offspring of parents belonging to the aristocracy returned from their studies abroad influenced by the revolutionary French movement. Once at home they started a struggle for national sovereignty of their country, fighting even their parents who had blindly accepted the continuation of a system which had allowed them power and wealth. Progressive in their ideas, those revolutionaries wanted to bring down the century-old wall of preconceived beliefs, and gather all citizens together in a unique front with the goal of aligning their fatherland along with other European nations. For the Jewish population those young revolutionaries brought new hope. Some, whose families had lived for centuries in the country, had as "native Jews" enjoyed the same civil rights as the Romanians, while many more were still viewed as foreigners. The Proclamation of 1848, released by the revolution leaders, stated clearly the emancipation of the Israelites and the political rights of all countrymen of other faiths. It seemed that the dreams people had held so long were to be fulfilled. But the ideals of 1848 were stifled by the Russians when new Princes were installed on the thrones of Wallachia and Moldavia who were totally obedient to the "Great Brother from the East."

In December of 1850 a further decree was released stating that no Jew would be allowed to enter or settle in Moldavia who did not possess 5,000 piasters as well as skill in a craft or trade. In addition, the end of the Crimean War in 1856 brought new confidence to the Romanians. In the peace treaty signed in Paris in 1858 it was determined that three counties from South Bessarabia occupied by Russia in 1812 should be returned to Moldavia. During a campaign in 1857-1858 by partisans for the unification of the Danubian principalities, posters and proclamations were printed that promised the Jews full citizenship. Those promises were in line with the provisions of the Paris Treaty where it was stated that all people from the Danubian principalities should enjoy equal rights. Only "foreigners" could not benefit from this stipulation and according to the regulations put into effect by the Russians, the Jews were a "Foreign Nation" to whom the Paris Treaty did not apply. Anti-Semitic publications were released to spread hatred among Romanian citizens. In them it was explained that any poverty or failures they suffered were caused by the presence of the Jews. Starting then, and continuing to today, this kind of literature in various forms has been a part of the cultural climate of the country. Accounts of ritual murder, accusations of poisonings from vitriol added to the brandy sold by Jews, and many other assumptions have been part of the long standing anti-Semitic propaganda. In 1858, for the first time in a book entitled *The Sling* the accusation of ritual murder was mentioned, and from then on it was always a fixture in the psyche. A powerful and objective witness of the

times, Dr. Adolphe Stern, wrote: "This part was not missing either. It was spread through the masses with the benediction of the Church."

The Unification of the country, and the ascent to the throne of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as Prince of Romania were important events in the life of the Jewish population. Mihail Kogalniceanu, one of the prominent leaders of the 1848 revolution said in 1860 in an address to the Central Commission: "In the United Principalities, and especially in Moldavia where there is an important Israelite population, the government has as its duty to care for their well being in a way that those people rid themselves of everything that looks foreign and odd to the Romanians, with whom they must become like body and soul." The reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza was dominated by praiseworthy intentions to give legality to the Jewish aspirations and to end once and for all an unsolved problem. However, his generous actions were rejected by some leaders who were the flag bearers of xenophobic thought. In a message delivered on December 6, 1865 to the legislative assembly, Prince Cuza said: "Keeping in mind the circumstances, I have taken and will take new approaches in order to hasten as much as possible the emancipation of Romanians of Israelite rite." Later he added: "Equality of citizenship (of Jews) will situate the Romanian nation at the same level as other modern civilizations."

A coup d'etat in February, 1866, followed in the same year by the abdication of Prince Cuza and the enthronement of Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen as Prince of the United Principalities, was the beginning of fundamental changes in the life of the

country as a whole, and especially for the Jews. The desire to establish a legal framework for the government uncovered the need for a constitution that would reflect the political, social, and economic conditions in the country. It was expected that this first constitution, designed under the reign of the new Prince and written largely by those who once fought to implement the liberal thinking of 1848, would reflect their ideas.

In this period, Adolphe Crémieux, the well known French politician and good friend of most of Romanian leaders with whom he fought together in France in the revolution, made a stop in Romania returning from Turkey. A special session of the Parliament took place, and Crémieux said among others, but with clear references to the status of Jews of the land: "...Gentlemen, in France our dear Fatherland, our great revolution proclaimed equality between White(people) and Black(people). They were recognized as brothers, and the Black people from all our French possessions crossed their path from slavery to freedom. I wanted to add a word that I'm sure that will enchant your hearts: a French Jew was the one who faced the Blacks! This Jew was a member of the Provisory Government and is talking to you now! He is the one who is asking you now for those Jews in Romania, because he is the one who brought so much joy in the hearts of the Black people from our colonies."

Besides those inspired words, according to the publication "Le Siècle" of July 28, 1866, Adolphe Crémieux suggested the Romanian government through the uncle of the Prince Carol, a loan of 25 millions francs. It was a period of time when Romania was

experiencing a tough and difficult economic situation. The Romanian nationalism and xenophobic feelings against "strangers" prevailed. The Romanians rejected the proposed loan.

Responding to Crémieux's speech, C.A. Rosetti said: "... We wrote in the proposed Constitution those precious rights of equality for all people ... it will not be our fault if (those principles) are not proclaimed." He further stated that although achievements of those democratic principles had encountered stumbling blocks, the government had endeavored to rid the Constitution of everything related to religious intolerance.

However, although there were those who tried to keep out of the new constitution everything related to religious matters, the reactionary opposition was able to impose its point of view. One of their leaders was Simeon Barnut, who after the debacle of the peasant revolution of 1848 from Transylvania, while living and teaching in Iasi as an university professor, preached a nationalism which rejected everything that was not "pure" Romanian. In his lectures delivered between 1855 and 1863, he exhibited a fanatic hatred against "foreigners," by which he meant Jews, since the Prince of the country was of German ancestry. There were stormy debates in the Parliament when one speaker after another poured strong opposition to accept Article Seven in the proposed Constitution, while other spoke in favor of the Article Seven and the need to grant civil rights to each individual. The fights moved into the streets, organized by a teacher from Iasi who was a devoted follower of Barnut. Slum dwellers who had been paid with both money and brandy gathered in the courtyard of the

Parliament yelling: "Down with the Kikes." Unwilling or unable to respond to such demonstrations, those who had supported Article Seven announced its withdrawal (from the projected Constitution) whereupon the victorious mobs converged in the beautiful new Coral Temple and completely destroyed it. Prince Carol returned hastily to Bucharest from the countryside where he had been visiting. Profoundly shocked by what happened, he issued a proclamation in which he stigmatized the organizers for their barbaric acts, and further granted from his private assets a relief fund of six thousand gold ducats to help rebuild the vandalized structure. It should be noted that this was the only help received from the government, and that no one was punished for the aggression. A new epithet began to "enrich" the vocabulary of hate directed at the Jews described them as "vanguard of Germanism."

During the years immediately following, a great number of laws, decrees and instructions were issued. Jewish organizations from abroad tried constantly to intercede with the Romanian governments to alleviate the heavy burden brought on the Jews by all the sanctions, to no avail. As finally voted, the Constitution of 1866 afforded to the administration for those at the highest level to the last humble clerk the legality to harass the Jews. They were chased from villages and forced to live in cramped city quarters, they were expelled from schools and above all they were labeled and treated as vagabonds.

As late as 1958, The Dictionary for the Modern Romanian Language, issued by the Romanian Academy contained the following definition: "Vagabond (people and animals): those who wander on

the roads, who move aimlessly, and are without skill or dwelling place."

During 1851 in Iasi, a Commission Against Vagrancy had been established that had never been abolished, and over the years it had allowed public servants to interpret it according to their own views and to demand bribes from the Jewish populace for official benevolences. Many of those who were termed vagabonds came from the small townlets settled by their ancestors at the invitation of the great landowners. They found themselves a class outside the classes, despised and always the ones to face humiliation. They could be expelled from their villages simply by mayoral order. In the cities, those employed in the trades or professions could be arrested and sent on foot under heavy guard from city to village until, reaching a border, they were expelled from the country.

It should be noted that, in most of the anti-Semitic legislation enacted over the years, the words "Jew" or "Kike" were not used. By simple deduction if someone was not Romanian, he was a "foreigner" and that was the term often found. Later, to be more specific, the term was expanded to "foreigners who are not subjects of a foreign country." Thus Jews born and raised on Romanian soil but labeled "foreigners" did not enjoy the protection of any law. Those most affected were the Jews who had settled in the villages. There discrimination came under the aegis of concern for the peasants' well being. Jewish shopkeepers were accused of poisoning the peasants with the brandy they sold but seldom drank themselves.

As an image reflecting the life condition of the Jewish population at the beginning of the 19th century in the Danubian Principalities, one could find some interesting connotations done by the well known Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu. In a lecture delivered in front of a large audience in the city of Botosani, he said relating to the epoch, people and customs: "...What was the country (representing) in 1820? Great landowners, middle landowners and public servants. The serfdom peasantry was living under the "protection" of those owners. The layman and monastic clergy were never under state administration, living according to their middle age customs, ruling themselves by their closed laws and regulations. The landowner was an autocrat on his estate, who could be brought in front of a Court of Justice, only under the Penal Code. Who remained to be under the State administration? The small landowner, the merchant, and the guilds." Profoundly concerned by one of the plagues abated on the peasantry, this poor and numerous part of the population, Eminescu said: "...All of us are astonished by the multitude of inns in our country; of the multitude of kikes in our country. The reason is the brandy, the great number of distilleries that are working in full capacity... Now, things changed! The distilleries need the surplus of wheat, and the residue could be used for raising and fattening the cattle. But the main use of the distilleries was the production of brandy. And brandy needs customers, because year after year the production was in full rise." A lot of inns opened and salesmen needed. Jews were brought in the land, and the landlord who was entitled to produce brandy and sell it, which was one of his old

privileges, compelled the tenant of the inn to buy brandy from him, and at a price asked by him. A certain quantity of brandy ought to be bought by the tenant, and the risks of selling it belonged to him. People were addicted to brandy. The landlord, in order to increase the sell of brandy used to pay the peasants who worked on his estate, with certain quantities of brandy.

As a consequence over the years, and thanks to the multitude of laws and decrees, the Jews were evicted from the villages, and their right to sell brandy abrogated. But the boyars, the owners of the distilleries had their business to do, and always looked after someone to sell their merchandise.

One of much used accusations in the anti-Semitic propaganda was that the Jews are "people poisoners." Rivers of ink were spread regarding this blasphemy; and much Jewish blood was shed because of this label. Jews- but not all of them- were dealing with selling liquors. But brandy was the landlord merchandise, produced in his set up, sold in his own inn, which was rented to "his" Jew, who was obliged to buy the brandy only from him, at the price asked by the owner-producer. In those circumstances, with laws forbidding the Jews to settle in the country and sell brandy, their eviction was considered a normal measure trying to protect the good health of the peasant. In the meantime the Romanians selling the same product, never became the "people's killers" and their trade was done only for the good of the people and Fatherland's glory. Their brandy was metamorphosed in a kind of "rose water," and talented playwriters like Vasile Alecsandri wrote theatre plays full of poison depicting the "Village

Leaches". Cezar Boliac and Ion Heliade Radulescu - among many others- continued their propaganda. It was the moment when Crémieux delivered his unforgettable speech on the Parliament floor, and Bratianu said:" The Jews are becoming a social calamity, a social disease of whom we have to get rid of." Bratianu never changed his believes against the Jews and acted always accordingly. Regarding this attitude, Crémieux wrote in "Le Siècle" of July 28, 1866 "In Romania, the Liberal Party professes the highest political opinions, which sympathizes with the 1848 revolution. I'm obliged to say it again, that regarding the social and religious questions they are still living in the 15th or 16th century."

The explosion of anti-Semitism blew up in the face of this poor population that wondered what to do, and where to go. The most important of these administrative dispositions were the famous circulars released by Ion Bratianu in his new assignment as Minister of Interior. In those dated March 21st, April 7th, and May 7th 1866, orders were addressed to the prefects of the counties asking to look over, and get rid of the "vagabonds" and to chase them from the villages. From the cities, the vagabonds should be expelled right away over the borders. The police and the slum dwellers from Iasi started to round up people, and shortly around two hundred were arrested and crowded in the courtyard of the Police. This "activity" was carried on in the late hours of the night, with Bratianu's blessings.

Napoleon, the French Emperor sent a telegram to Prince Carol showing his profound distress for the persecutions. Things went on

unchanged. In April 1868, 500 families from the villages of the county of Bacau were expelled by the order of Prefect Lecca. In the cities of Falticeni and Bacau the National Guard was on duty with orders to protect the population from excesses. The guards took part in the pillages. This situation followed with the same intensity, and when foreign powers tried to intervene, the reply was always the same: "The Jewish problem is an internal Romanian problem and nobody has the right to interfere." In the district of Falciu, 94 families (500 persons) were expelled in 24 hours. In Vaslui, 158 families (800) persons were brutality uprooted from their places.

The idea of chasing the Jews from villages or from the country wasn't motivated just by the denomination as "vagabonds" who lived as parasites, who didn't produce anything for the development of the country. People knew very well that this was propaganda, but they liked to hear it again and again and at the end started to believe it. The state of facts could be seen through specific phases, applied in different periods: when forced by the fluctuations of the economic situation, lacking a solution and not able to find a better one; when in order to solve it, they asked foreign banking houses for loans, usually denied, knowing what happened to the Jews. The results were more persecutions, and the blame of the situation shifted always against this population.

The ideology of hatred overpassed the intellectual circles, penetrating in the masses, which, when the opportunity arose, manifested violently.

On the floor of the Parliament, it was said that the Jews wanted to turn the fatherland of Stephen the Great and Alexander the Good into a wretched modern Palestine, that they were pests like a swarm of locusts, and a threat to the country and Romanian liberty. Small wonder that after listening to such "patriotic" terms there were many who were ready to take action against the Jews. An order went out that the Communal Councils had the right to banish foreigners who were not officially authorized to reside in a given community, and the years 1866 and 1869 would be remembered as those when the status on some small market towns was altered in villages to allow easier expulsion of them of the Jews who had been dwelling there.

Delegations of Jews tried to see the Minister of the Interior, Mihail Kogalniceanu, hoping he could be convinced to cancel those wicked orders. But he would not listen to them.

*

A young San Francisco attorney named Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, who was concerned for the plight of Romanian Jews met in December 1870 with the American Secretary of State, Hamilton Fisch. Later he was received in a special audience by President Ulysses Grant who appointed him General Consul of the United States in Romania. President Grant was aware of Peixotto's worries for his fellow Jews, and in his letter of accreditation wrote that Mr. Peixotto was undertaking the assignment in an attempt to help his brothers, as their representative. Peixotto arrived in Bucharest in January

1871 during a period of considerable unrest. War between France and Germany showed its consequences; a one day Republic had been proclaimed in Ploiesti as a reaction to discontent with the foreign Prince, there had been a financial scandal over the building of railroads, and in the same month the Prince had published an article in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* announcing his intention to give up the throne and leave the country.

Peixotto was received by Prince Carol, to whom he handed over his credentials and spoke of the United States policy of not discriminating among its citizens by religion or nationality, and of the need for such liberal and enlightened ideas to spread to all countries. The Prince responded that he had great admiration for Pelxotto's country and was grateful to the United States for developing such a liberal spirit. Peixotto's presence at the Palace, and publication of his and the Prince's speeches, stirred up a storm of criticism. Newspapers slandered the American envoy, and they were joined in their chorus by prominent personalities who were well known for their anti-Jewish sentiments.

To discover more about the reality of Jewish life, as well as to confront its needs and attempt to find ways to help, Peixotto and a few collaborators journeyed to Moldavia. Much of what he found there was the same as had been noted in a book published ten years earlier in 1857 by a French archeologist, Ernest Desjardins, who was well known for his anti-Semitism. In his book *Les Juifs de Moldavie,* although he wrote with an obvious lack of objectivity, he made some interesting comments on the social conditions of the

Jews, their poverty, their cultural deprivation, and their lack of adequate medical care. Like Peixotto he was struck by their humble condition, and their fear of government at all levels. He felt that the Jews had become unwilling pawns of the political parties opposing the government, and that even the government would use them when needed, to fulfill its goals.

During the summer of 1872, the vacationing Peixotto began a thorough study of the Jewish existence-the pressures being exercised against them, and the exaggeration by the government of their numbers and the threat they posed to the Romanian people. He came to the conclusion that, because the Jews were caught in a web of conflicting political interests and vocal nationalistic groups, there could be no other solution to alleviating their misery than mass emigration.

The concept of emigration had started to take shape after the brutal campaign of expelling the Jews from the villages, and organizing such an exodus had been discussed by Rabbis Armand Levy and S. Taubes with Prime Minister Bratianu in 1868. Bratianu was very interested in such a project and had promised to ask Parliament to allocate the monies needed to carry it out. Those funds were not forthcoming, but a few years later 228 emigrants from Moldavia laid a cornerstone for the concept of mass emigration by establishing the colonies of Zichron Iaacov and Roch Pina in Eretz Israel.

From the beginning, Peixotto's project of organizing a mass migration of Romanian Jews to the United States enjoyed support from the American government. The *United States Gazette*, a

Philadelphia newspaper, published a comprehensive article in which it depicted the life of the Romanian Jewish community and announced the need for funds. To determine the Romanian government reaction to his proposed project, Peixotto wrote to the Prime Minister to ask if he would sanction or approve it in principle, and if he would provide financial support for it. The Council of Ministers, called to a special session on August 9, 1872, determined that the government could not agree to funding the project, but would grant passports free of charge to Jews wishing to leave. At the same time, orders were released to the Prefectures all over the country asking to make it easier for applicants to obtain approval to emigrate. These actions and the haste with which they occurred got close to ridiculous since they responded to a mere inquiry from Peixotto. They did, however, show beyond any doubt the Romanian government's desire to get away with the Jews, and they allowed the government to demonstrate to the populace that it had found a solution for the country to get rid of them. The press was euphoric and wrote about the patriotic call to duty for all Romanians to help ease the Jews' departure-even by giving them money for the journey.

The newspaper *Romanul* (The Romanian) of August 7-8, 1877 published an article stating that mass emigration would be very important and beneficial to Romania. It went on to say that if the Jews were to emigrate in substantial numbers, the country would be ***rid*** of thousands of parasites living off the labor and products of the Romanians, and that the country would be saved from calamity. The article also said that if the Jews didn't emigrate- which

unfortunately would probably be the case- their failure to leave would prove to the world that they were not so miserably treated and so persecuted as was claimed, and that they preferred to remain in Romania. And the article continued:" ... The American outlook regarding the emigration of the Jews from Romania to the United States was stated in the "Official Bulletin," from which we are taking the below mentioned document relating to this important question. It is the most outstanding problem which could of profit for Romania. We didn't arrive to the conclusion that we are falling on our backs in a kind of ecstasy in face of the American suggestion... First, all those Jews from across the River Milcov (the border between Moldavia and Wallachia) are jostling one another in order to take advantage of all kinds of facilities given to them for emigrating to America; because those "unfortunate" Jews would rather prefer the persecutions about which they are complaining each day than the gold of California.

The American idea was a great and beneficial one, and for us it has a clear motivation. Although the United States are leading the pressures combined with violence against Romania regarding the Jewish problem, they changed completely their way of dealing with the problem ...Let be known that in any European country the complaints against persecutions are not so many as in the United States. It was a period of time when no meeting of the American Congress was held, with no Representatives to deliver the Romanian Jews of the most awful calumnies...

That is the way the concocted idea is important and so beneficiary for Romania. According to their numbers, the Jews who

invaded Romania and subdued the upper part of the land across the River Milcov posed a most favorable dilemma for the Romanians: if they emigrate in a large enough number, and if the country gets rid of hundreds of thousands of parasites who live on the work and production of the Romanians, then the country will be safe from the greatest calamity. If they don't emigrate, a very unpleasant situation, they could demonstrate to the world that they are not so unhappy as they claim, that they choose to stay instead of leaving for America at their own expense.

Consequently, starting with the day in which we said that we'll make the Jewish emigration to America easy, the voices of those whiners and slanderers will be shut up if the Jews were really unfortunate and persecuted, we'll take care of the journey's expenses like the American Association founded for the same purpose in the United States. If the Jews don't emigrate... and stay in the country... the world will recognize that Romania has the right to safeguard its interests..."

Meanwhile, international public opinion supported the idea of emigration, while criticizing the anti-Semitic policies of the Romanian government, the impoverished masses of Romanian Jews received the idea with relief -especially in Moldavia. A well-to--do and influent stratum of the Jewish population rejected the concept of emigration, viewing it as a lack of patriotism on the part of their fellow Jews, and as a move to obtain citizens' rights for themselves. They even began a campaign of slander against Peixotto. In spite of their actions, on October 29 and 30, 1872 there was a conference in Brussels organized by the Romanian

(Jewish) Committee that was attended by delegates from England, France, the United States, Germany, Austria, Belgium, and Holland. On their agenda were three points: a memorandum to be sent to the Romanian Parliament regarding Jewish citizenship, organization of a campaign to inform Romanians about the truth of the so called "Jewish problem," and the mass emigration of the Jews. Although Peixotto fought fiercely for it, the third item of the agenda was overridden by a strong opposition and the idea of mass emigration was put aside. It was only in 1884, after release of the Law of Itinerant Trade which prohibited Jews from exercising their traditional trade of haberdashery, that Jews left the country in large numbers. From then until 1891, about 80,000 emigrated.

The event that changed the face of the country was the war between Russia and Turkey in 1877. For the Romanians, after centuries of Turkish sovereignty, with Greek rulers sent from Istanbul to govern the Danubian Principalities, and occupation after occupation of their lands situated at the crossroads of Europe, the opportunity for independence seemed to have arrived. In April of that year, an agreement was signed with Russia allowing Russian troops to cross Romanian territory on their way to Bulgaria. Their passage offered a boost to the economy because army supplies and animal fodder were to be provided by the Romanians- and the Russians always paid in gold. On April 11, Russian troops crossed the River Prut- and on May 10, the Romanian Parliament decreed the Independence of Romania. Following a few defeats at the hands of the well entrenched Turks in the stronghold of Plevna, on July 19, 1877 the Grand Duke, Commander

in Chief of the Russian army, sent a telegram to Prince Carol asking for his military support. On August 20, 1877 a Romanian army of 30,000 started crossing the Danube. Addressing his troops, Prince Carol said: "Forwards, Romanian soldiers. Forwards with resolution, and in a short time you will return to your families in a country freed by ourselves, and the whole of mankind will applaud you."

As in every war thereafter, Jewish soldiers were present among those who fought the enemy. A young lieutenant named Mauriciu Brociner was presented to the troops by his commander with the words: "You are the first Jewish officer. Your honor, your family honor, the honor of your entire nation stand now in your hands. Be first on the target and the whole country will reward you." The young Brociner, who was wounded twice in battle and who took over command of his battalion when his commander fell, was awarded medals by the Romanian and the Russian governments, and all over the country he was celebrated as a hero. His fellow Jews who fought with the Romanian troops struggled valiantly, always ready to contribute their blood toward the goal of Romanian independence.

From the first moments of that war, Jewish civilians were mobilized. A central committee was organized and a manifesto was released telling the Jewish community that it was everybody's duty to contribute- in order to help the country in which they had been born- using their hands, their knowledge, and their wealth for the good of the country. It went on to say that the fatherland needed all the help they could give and that all disputes should be put

aside, while facing this emergency. The women organized as the "Israelite Ladies." People went from door to door taking contributions, students left their schools to go to the battle front, and homes were turned into shops where people worked night and day to prepare warm clothing for the soldiers. Significant amounts of money were collected and donated to the Red Cross, or to the government for the purchase of weapons and ammunition needed on the battle fronts. The Committee at Iasi made up a field hospital with twenty beds. When a parade was organized to march before Princess Elizabeth, among the Red Cross ambulances were five "Zion" ambulances whose appearance was greeted with enthusiastic applause. Those medical vehicles were equipped and fully staffed by Jews. One that crossed the Danube with the Third Division on August 15th was credited with saving the lives of scores of wounded soldiers during the siege of Plevna where it provided first aid to more than six hundred soldiers and where its staff distinguished itself through dedication under fire to serve the wounded. They received warm thanks and commendations for their acts from the division commander who said that without them the casualties would have been much greater and that the service they had rendered during the campaign would be remembered forever in Romanian hearts. When the victorious Romanian army returned from the battlefields on October 8, 1878 the Jewish leaders received decorations and were seated near the Prince at the official ceremony. Because they had been the only minority group that fought with the Romanian army in the War of Independence, hope at

that time was strong that they would be thereafter treated differently.

In Berlin, following the war, the European Congress decided to grant Romania its independence, and in Article 44 of the Berlin Treaty it was stated that this independence was conferred with the essential condition **(sine qua non)** that Romanian Jews receive rights equal to those of the Romanian population. That provision stirred up a storm of protest in Bucharest, and in the Parliament speaker after speaker raised their voice to object, even though others advised them to accept Article 44 for the good of the country. It should be noted that little protest was made to the provision in the same Treaty that three counties of Southern Bessarabia- the ones that had been returned to Romania under the 1858 Paris Treaty- be given back to Russia. After long debates, Parliament granted citizenship to 883 Jews who had fought on the front lines in the War of Independence- the remainder of the Jewish population would receive citizenship only on an individual basis, and only on approval of each case by the Parliament. Thus the old warped system was maintained, Jewish emancipation was shelved, and the twisted Balkan bureaucratic system of delaying matters had won again. The Romanian action caused great indignation in the other European countries and the government was forced to send high-ranking delegates to several capital cities in an attempt to dispel the poor perception of Romania held there. Economic concessions were offered to some European partners and, most importantly, Bismarck's benevolence was acquired by payment of one hundred million marks to cover the losses of German

shareholders of the Strousberg Company during Romanian railroad construction. Nevertheless, even as delegates were acting abroad, the Minister of the Interior issued a circular to the Prefects of the counties in which he told them to have regard for the rights of all, regardless of nationality, and to chase vagabonds and send them across the borders. In official language, vagabonds meant Jews and, in response to these depositions, Jews were arrested at Focsani in their homes, on the streets, and in their shops, in order to expel them. News of these acts leaked abroad, "The Times" of London published an article about these extraditions, and in August of 1879 the Minister of the Interior was forced to issue a second circular canceling his first one in an attempt to cool public opinion abroad. Officially, it was admitted that just two Jews were actually expelled and that before their arrest they had been recognized as foreigners on the streets of Focsani by the manner in which they were dressed, their features, and their inability to speak the Romanian language. That version of the incident was reported as an explanation to the Romanian embassy in Paris which conveyed it to "The Times" in London. When the "two vagabonds" arrived at the railroad station in Adjud, having been walked there from Focsani under heavy guard, photographs were taken of twenty-three Jews waiting in the station to be sent by train to Bacau and from there abroad. That photograph was published in London, where it caused sensation, and the Minister of Interior had no choice but to admit that all of the twenty-three "vagabonds" were people who had been residing in the country, and had been employed in a trade or craft. The

photographers, Elias Vitzling and Dascalu Levinson were arrested and spent a year in prison.

Still harassment and violence directed at the Jews continued in many areas, in some instances even against those who had been granted citizenship, and applications for passports were denied. In Bucharest a well known aristocrat Kneaz Moruzy, being the commander of the Capital Police, while strolling on Victoria Boulevard, saw some Jews, disliked their looks, and had them arrested. In May 1884, the Prefect of Putna County, while inspecting the village of Hangul, ordered that all twenty-nine Jewish families living there be expelled. At Dumbraveni, the Jewish men managed to escape, but their remaining wives and daughters were raped by peasants at the instigation of the landlord's steward. A newspaper "The Voice of Botosani" offered vigorous protest to these acts, but they continued. Even a veteran of 1877 War of Independence, whose son was serving in the army, was arrested and sent by foot to Botosani. He was told that he could not remain in his village without a special authorization.

Disturbed by the abuses, leaders of the Jewish community requested, and on May 27, 1884 were granted, an audience with King Carol during which they described their situation and especially the inhuman law that was forbidding the itinerant peddlers to continue their trade. They also raised the issue of how impossible it was to acquire passports for emigration. In spite of the King's promises to look into the matter, persecutions went ahead unchecked. The old "Law of Foreigners", giving the Ministry of the

Interior the right to expel any foreigner "disturbing" the public order, was brought out and dusted off.

In August of 1884, a delegation of prominent Jews and politicians in England was received in a special audience by the Marquis of Salisbury who listened attentively to their report of what was happening to the Jews in Romania, and promised his help. News of that meeting caused a sensation in Romania, and to demonstrate that the Jews were real "vagabonds," the authorities ordered that a group of people be photographed wearing rags, and that the resulting pictures be sent abroad to demonstrate why the Romanians were entitled to pursue such persons.

As the nineteenth century was ending, the anti-Semitic movement was expanded mainly against Jewish enterprises and their place in the economy of the country. Some organizations known as cooperative movements or anti-Semitic leagues were active under the leadership of the clergy, teachers, and state employees. One of the most visible forms of activity employed was the economic boycott and at all of their meetings could be heard the slogan, "don't buy even a needle from a Kike." Their hatred was under the protection of the cross, the priests were the propagandists and their altars were where the banners were blessed.

The anti-Semitic movement was strengthened by the organization in September 1886 of the Romanian European Anti--Semitic Congress- with impressive participation from abroad and Romania. Representatives from Hungary and Germany delivered incendiary speeches and they were joined by prominent Romanians like a liberal senator, the editor of the newspaper *Desteptarea*

(The Awakening) and others. In order to provide proper background for the event Bratianu allowed the congress to be held in the beautiful hall of the Romanian Athenee, and the two official newspapers of the liberal party. *Vointa Nationala* (The National Will) and *Steaua Romana* (The Romanian Star) published daily columns about the debates taking place in the congress. The resolutions voted by the congress were to be known for years to come as the program for anti-Semitic hatred, and the congress closed with remarkable enthusiasm.

From Bucharest the congress moved to Craiova where a crowd of 2,000 packed the hall. Craiova had only a small Jewish population, but after the congress speeches the people who had heard them crowded the streets to destroy and plunder shops and synagogues. And the priest who led the mob could take pride in the nights' work.

A year before, in 1885, under the leadership of a high school teacher named Nae Dumitrescu, the Anti Semitic Alliance was formed. In it were a number of public servants and intellectuals. This alliance was a free-mason type of organization that had as its main goal the destruction of Romanian Jewry. Its members were labeled by their denominations- Anti-Semitic Knight, Knight of the Order of Saint Michael, or Member of the Great Council. They fought for a pure Romanian state, and as a result of their activities against the Jews, General Berindei brought up to the Parliament the law known as the Berindei Law in which it was stated that the Jews were excluded from serving in the Army. Instead, they were to pay a large sum of money as a kind of tax

for being excused from duty. The Jewish reservists protested and a group of students responded by taking to the streets. In the senate, the Minister of the Interior, Polihroniade, declared that the Jews were responsible for what had happened. Petre Carp took the floor to say, "...you are talking about foreigners? ...they are Romanian subjects...we are in the presence of more than 300,000 souls living outside the law without protection from the government or from other countries." The Berindei Law did not pass then, yet in 1941 when the same law was presented, General Ion Antonescu released a decree stating that Jews should be expelled from the Army and should pay each year an amount of money as a military tax.

The last decade of the nineteenth century began with a new law in which it was stated that education was to be compulsory and free of charge only for the children of Romanian citizens. Dr. Adolphe Stern wrote of this law: "...a new calamity for the Jews. Until now, we have been stripped of our political rights and crushed in our economic endeavors, but now, they are trying to crush our spirits."

Jewish children were expelled first from the professional schools, and then from the entire educational system. Jews had been hounded from the villages and driven out of the cities, but now even the children were being dispossessed of a basic education. Jewish communities opened their own schools in which the curriculum was taught in Romanian, and children learned from their earliest days the bitter taste of the ghetto.

According to the census of 1899, there were 266,652 Jews in Romania- 4.5% of the total population. By 1912, emigration had brought those figures to 241,088- 3.3% of the population. Seventy to eighty thousand had already left the country following the War of Independence, meaning that in a period of twenty to twenty-five years more than 100,000 Jews had departed.

BOOK TWO

AMERICA'S AROUND THE CORNER

Chapter 3

A JEWISH UPRISING

There is no doubt that Jews inhabited this land since the foundation of the principalities. In the twelfth century they could be found in commercial cities as Little Halitz (Galatz) and Tecuci, then under the rule of a Galician prince. Jews could be found in the Northern part of Moldavia and Bessarabia, too. Although information concerning the Jews of Wallachia is dim, it is known that Jews were mostly traders, and the commerce of the country was as a whole conducted by them through well organized relationships with other Jews, within the country and from abroad.

With the sixteenth century comes a new immigration, composed of Polish and Turkish Jews. The religious dissension which broke out in Poland at the beginning of the century encouraged Jews to make proselytes, and they sent the converts to Moldavia and Wallachia, in order not to expose them to the hatred of the Christians. Those proselytes formed an addition to the voluntary immigrants. Others came from Turkey, especially after Wallachia had fallen under the Turkish suzerainty at the end of the fourteenth century. In 1513 Moldavia shared the same fate. This was the time when the Jews of Turkey began to play an important role in the State and to gain diplomatic influence at the court, in the harems, with the pashas and the grand vizirs. It was the time when princes of Moldavia and Wallachia, and later Greeks from Constantinople -known as Phanariots- turned to the influent Jews to obtain the throne or to strengthen their position.

Trade with Turkey was expanding, and the Jews of Constantinople and other places frequently visited the Principalities. Many settled there permanently.

The sixteenth century was from the beginning a period with many disturbances against the Jews. The end of this bloody period was marked by massacres in both Principalities ordered by Michael the Brave in Wallachia and Emmanuel Aaron in Moldavia. In Soroca, Jews were killed by Cossacks, who led the Jews into captivity. Even the purveyors of the Army suffered also in the hands of the Moldavian people who profited of Michael the Brave's invasion to rob them of their cattle. These events were followed by the Tartars incursions into Moldavia, when Jews were compelled to leave the country. In addition to those calamities was the plague which broke out in Roman, Bacau, Piatra, Heamt, and Suceava, where the Jews were made responsible for those epidemics.

With the beginning of the seventeenth century, the princes became fragile instruments in the hands of pashas who appointed and recalled them at will in order to extort as much as possible from them. In the eighteenth century, the condition of the principalities underwent a great change. To satisfy the increasing desire of the pashas and Constantinople, the princes oppressed the people, especially the Jews, for more money. When their exaction became unbearable, they were deposed. The life of the Jews in those circumstances was a reflection of the demands and capricies of the rulers, and the Jews had no other choice but to obey orders faithfully.

When those demands were fulfilled Jews managed to sometimes live under the protection- handsomely paid- of the aristocracy. The Jews started living in the cities, villages, and market-towns founded by them or their ancestors. Their activity was recognized everywhere. Many went to Hotin and other cities of the Moldavian border and Poland with leather belts, embroideries, textile fabrics, and carpets. On their way back, they brought furs from Russia. Other exported cattle and product to as far as Frankfurt and Breslau. Besides trade, Jews were employed in all the crafts. Some of them started to live in comfortable homes, and were chosen for lodging distinguished guests.

In the eighteenth century, the numbers of Jews increased through immigration from Hungary, Russia and Turkey. Though the majority were traders, many of them were involved in all kind of crafts. They joined the guilds of craftsmen on an equal footing with Christians. The people at large, however, despised and insulted them. In the meantime, they were well received by the boyars and high dignitaries of the State, and even by princes, and the artisans- through their skills succeeded in acquiring privileges, exemptions, favors, and influence. Several princes appointed the Provost of the Jews of Bucharest as Cuiungi Basha, or Grand Provost of the silversmiths. In 1792, a Jew named Eliezer, was Giuvaergiu-Bascha, Grand Provost of the Jewelers. These were high positions conferring upon the holders a certain authority as well as powers over the members of the guild, which they were naturally defending.

The nineteenth century was marked by a large and cruel enforcement of laws and decrees already imposed on the Jews, all of them meant to uproot the Jews from the land they belonged to. Their emigration meant passage from a hope and dream to a better life, to reality, and everybody tried to reach it according to their social status and material means.

The story of the Jewish emigration from Romania could be described in three stages, which cover more than a century. After the War of Independence,(1877-1878) the departures started to take on a large proportion; in the same time, modern capitalism, along with anti-Semitism as a political movement, took a strong hold on the country. After the first World War, the Jewish population in the Greater Romania reached about 800,000. In the years between the two World Wars, around 30,000 Jews emigrated. It was an intermediate stage without significant impact in the life of the Jewish population. The third and most important stage came after World War Two, when the Communist leaders took the power and the Jewish population left the country almost entirely.

During these periods, emigration was a way of showing deep frustration from the realities of daily life. The Jews didn't leave in order to run from the reality; but their emigration was a result of it. What they did could be termed- in a certain way- an uprising. If one looks at the Jewish history, they were always the ones against whom the anger of the populace was directed, it was they who were brought before the courts to pay for disorders, robberies, and killings. Their uprising at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth centuries is unknown

elsewhere, and they were resolute about carrying it out to the very end.

The Bar-Kochba revolt was a powerful national movement against conquerors and oppressors who wanted to destroy the Temple-the holy symbol of Judaism- and thus obliterate the Jewish soul. The revolt of the Warsaw Ghetto was a cry against injustice. All were aware of the results from confronting the Nazi army, but the Jews had determined not to die on their knees and fought fiercely to the end. Their sacrifice and struggle is carved in letters of fire in the history books.

A few years after the beginnings of the mass emigration from Romania, the peasant revolt of 1907 began. In the first stage, the Jews were the targets, thanks to propaganda in the press, and word of mouth. The Jews paid heavily until the peasants turned their anger on their real exploiters; the great estates were brought to ashes, warehouses filled with seeds and grain were plundered. It seemed at times, as if the whole country were on fire. Again, the Jews were pointed as the guilty ones.

At first the Jewish "uprising" from Romania developed apparently without leadership, lacking clear plans and strategies, and lacking ideology. They carried no weapons; although surrounded by people who hated them, they killed no one, and although they were badly in need of food, they never plundered. It was an uprising aimed toward themselves, and perhaps this was the reason the movement and the way in which it manifested itself was carried out with such persistence. This time, questions, not answers, had the power to move them. "How could we support it until now? Why

have we endured when we are human beings like everyone else?" On one or two folded pages of paper, they printed articles about their lives and everything related to their departure. Some wrote poems which became the lyrics for songs. A folklore sprang up and has remained part of the culture. As they traveled, they stopped in villages or cities where they organized shows, and the money collected helped them subsist along the way. Few were intellectuals - those would leave later. A mass of craftsmen and small shopkeepers whom the economy had bankrupted, made up the group. The media began to look at the emigration as a constructive factor, when they realized the proportions of the movement and its consequences to the country as a whole. The newspaper *La Roumanie* on April 28, 1900 contained the following: "The Jewish emigration has taken considerable proportions which are worrisome in some aspects. Those who are leaving Romanian soil are depriving us of their skills. The emigration is spreading among the Jewish working class, which has been a useful group for us here. We could say useful because they are craftsmen and Romanians do not like this kind of work." At the same time the Anti-Semitic League was saying that the Jewish oppression is state dogma, and that Jews who dare to oppose it are traitors. Put into other words, they meant that Jews must allow themselves to be beaten, but do not have the right to cry. Picture posters continued to be displayed mocking the Jews and their reason was to make the large number of people who were illiterate understand their meaning. Those whose voices were raised with hatred outnumbered those who defended the Jews. In a time of poverty, when drought, an invasion of insect pests

destroyed the crops and vineyards it was not that which made the Jews leave- it was the addition to these hardships of the campaign of hatred and the release of new legislation against them which made life impossible. Then, they decided to go. From August to the end of 1899, thousands departed. No one stopped them, no one chased them, and no one asked them to stay. In fact, a kind of contest began, to determine which office could issue more passports. At the beginning, some of the emigrants had the means to sustain themselves on the road. Others were so poor they had no money for trains or ships. Those were the ones who arrived in the European ports dressed in rags and whose stories made the front pages of the newspapers.

Nobody had a clear vision of what the real dimensions of this departure would be. In an era of steam power and electric1tv, one could see in the cities and on the highways, countless wanderers who had lost the right to work. They fled in all directions, urged by hunger and the need to escape a place where their dignity had been trodden under others' feet. And so they ran away all over the world, in all conditions, looking for a shelter from human barbarism. It was an exodus. It was a display of pride and dignity.

Barlad is an old city on the Moldavian plateau known for its trade between the northern part of the country and the south Danubian cities of Galati and Braila. In it lived Romanians and a strong Jewish community. At the beginning of the twentieth century it had lost much of its past glory and was a backward place with a poor and jobless population. There were Jewish craftsmen of all

descriptions, and although the anti-Semitic movement was strong and active, even its followers could not deny the quality of their work. In his work *Romania and the Jews, Verax* said: "It is impossible to find the Jewish craftsman at fault. He deserves respect. Temperate, he is tireless and can hardly be criticized." But the laws which removed their right to work left them to starve.

There can be no doubt that the move toward emigration started powerfully in Barlad, because of the hatred which made life unbearable. On Christmas 1869, a dreadful uprising took place under the leadership of a district attorney and a teacher. It happened that a priest named Varnav who was a candidate for the Parliament, delivered an incendiary speech against the Jews and died immediately after. The entire group attending his meeting went into the Jewish quarter and destroyed everything in its path. When the troublemakers were brought to court, they were declared not guilty. In the same work Verax wrote: "Romania should first of all avoid withdrawing from the wise measures adopted since 1878 until today (1903). Should these conditions seem too harsh, they (the Jews) should try to emigrate- an efficient remedy for their sufferings. The country as well as the Jews will benefit from this. The future governments in Romania, regardless of party, will see that the Jews enjoy the protection of the current laws and will prevent and severely punish any brutality committed. But in choosing between the vital interests of the Romanian nation and the advantages of the Jews- they will not hesitate."

During the cold winter days and long winter nights, the only place in town where these poor Jewish people could gather, was the shabby tea house where its owner, Herman Sircus, sold boiling water for a few pennies along with a lot of free advice. As always, the main topic of discussion was America, and how to get there. The possibility brought hope- and bitterness as well with the knowledge that there was no money for such a journey. One night, someone said casually, "We will walk!" People had a good laugh over that, but the thought kept popping up again and again until one man, a certain Sami Ginsburg insisted that walking could be the only way.

Sami was a young slim man, full of energy. He wrote poems and short stories which were published in the local newspaper, *The Voice of Tutova,* and in the Zionist publications. He elaborated on the plan to walk saying that only the young people and the craftsmen should go. Those who were married and who would leave behind wives and children could hope that one day they could send them money to purchase tickets. A sort of association was founded named *The Travelers,* which opened lists for registration. Each registrant had to deposit a certain amount of money for expenses. With that amount, which was swelled by donations from many Christians who thought that there would be more bread for them if they helped the Jews leave. The organizers were able to buy a pair of horses and a carriage to transport luggage and food supplies. On April 20, 1900, the much awaited day of departure arrived, and the travelers' newspaper *The Wandering Jew* wrote, "From early morning the crowd waited restlessly. Besides parents and wives,

whole families came to say farewell to the travelers, along with a lot of Romanians who wanted to watch the departure." Herman Sircus' old tea house was cleaned up for the event, and a breakfast was offered to those who gathered there. It was a great show and everyone looking at those determined people began to wonder if they should do the same. A band played, tears were shed, and everyone understood that a new life stood in front of the travelers. At last, everyone was ready and in place, and the column began to move slowly. None had the money for boots. All wore peasants' sandals (opinci) and carried a backpack for food and water. Many also carried lamps mounted on long poles to light their way at night. With funds totaling 2,500 lei and determined to conserve each coin, they headed first for the city of Vaslui. Sixty of the seventy-two slated to leave departed on that day, and the remaining twelve joined them later.

The news of these brave emigrants spread rapidly and the Jewish communities along their route prepared to welcome them. At Vaslui people walked far out of the city to meet them, bringing bread and other food items. Each family hosted a traveler, and on Saturday, April 22 the pedestrians performed the play *Menachem ben Israel* with great financial success. The administrator of one of the large area estates, Adolph Blecher, received the column with a warm welcome, and provided a hearty meal in the courtyard at hastily improvised tables. Some of the artisans, as a way of thanking him, went about doing repairs that were needed on the estate, and before they departed peasants, brought eggs, chickens, and bread to help "those poor people."

The story of this first group leaving by foot is a lengthy one. They were soaked by heavy rains and chilled by cold winds, but their enthusiasm prevailed. There is no doubt that without the help of Jewish communities all along their route they could not have succeeded in their venture, but they always tried to show that they were not beggars seeking alms from the well to do, even though they accepted many times money from people they didn't know.

In the city of Botosani with a large Jewish community, the welcome surpassed all expectations. Arriving in Dorohoi, they discovered that the Austrian authorities would not allow them to cross the border to Bukovina, because the Jews there were stirring trouble among the population and the Austrians did not want the travelers to bring more trouble. That news was discouraging, but they did not give up and left Dorohoi accompanied by a large crowd and headed for the border only to find that the news regarding their passage to Bukovina was confirmed, and intercessions were useless. As a last resort they sent a telegram to Theodor Herzl, the Zionist leader in Vienna, asking for his help. Meanwhile they waited in the small town of Mihaileni where the county prefect met them together with a great number of Jewish residents and had them sheltered in the Jewish school. Finally, a telegram along with a messenger from the Jewish community at Cernauti arrived, bringing the good news that the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs had accepted their plea and that they would be allowed to enter Austria for transit only, and for departure they had to take the train. On hearing the news, the Jews in Barlad sent a telegram to

Dr. Herzl: "More than 2,000 Jews gathered today, Saturday, May 12, 1900, to send you their eternal gratitude for carrying from Barlad our emigrants who left by foot in a moment of great despair. ... we believe in your energy and your wisdom and we hope for better times and more freedom. God bless you. Signed Dr. Friedman."

The travelers left Mihaileni with high hopes heading for the Siret River. By then their number counted more than one hundred and eleven. The local intellectuals marched in front of them carrying flags of the Zionist associations, one with an *Magen David*. It was the last stop before crossing the border. On Sunday, May 13, 1900 in a disciplined line, the emigrants crossed the border. It was a great moment in their daring enterprise. When they left Bukovina, they counted one hundred and seventeen individuals. A few days later they reached Stanislaw where they boarded the train; fees were collected by public donations. In Iwow, and later Crakow, the welcome was unique in its proportions. Soon, they were in Berlin, and then Hamburg their port of departure from Europe. There a journalist asked them: "You were helped to leave. Why weren't you helped to stay where you belonged?"

On their arrival in New York the entire group was held at the "Castle Garden" because they were paupers and entry to the United States was not permitted. But a rich person came forward to deposit a large sum of money, and the doors were opened to them. The Romanian-American Association helped them find shelter, and all began trying to start their new lives.

That first echelon was soon followed by another leaving from the same city of Barlad. This time, however, the column took a different route- heading toward Southern Moldavia to the Danube River and after a detour, reaching the Carpathian Mountains. They intended to follow the highway toward Brasov, but were stopped at the border city of Predeal by customs officers who would not allow them to proceed because they were not traveling by train. After long and tiresome discussions they received the green light and finally reached Brasov. There, each emigrant received some money, food for the road, and train tickets. Thus, despite delays, that second group finally reached New York as well. But this time there was no one to sponsor them and they worked on the harbor constructions sites until they had saved enough money to pay the legal fees, after which they were blended into the mass of other Jewish Romanian immigrants in the country.

Looking back, this exodus was impressive not only by the numbers who left Romania, but by the categories of those who decided to leave. This time, groups of women followed the same route as their predecessors- and their final destination was not only the United States, but also England, Canada, South Africa, and South America. People from Romania could be found wandering about in all the major harbors of Europe looking for ways to board ships. And they included craftsmen, small shopkeepers, young students, doctors, and builders. The greatest number came from Bucharest where they had been stirred by news about the success of the travelers from Moldavia who had contacted their relatives in the Capitale for support in their enterprise. In less than one

month, more than thirty associations of emigrants were established. Most of them carried the name of their members' professions, while others named their organization for Jewish personalities- Dr. Herzl, Dr. Gaster, and others. Some carried names which reflected their ideals: The Emigrant, The Hope, The Association of These 150 Young Ladies. Soon emblems and armbands identified them.

These groups attempted to travel the Danube River by ship, but they arrived in cities where their goals did not arise much interest since other groups had already been there before them and the communities were beginning to feel unable to give more help after receiving so many groups of travelers in such great need. The shows the emigrants put on became an interesting repertoire and the newspapers in which they managed to publish brought some funds to their empty coffers. Audiences packed the halls of synagogues, or large courtyards to see and hear them before they moved on with their goal of getting to America. Some groups published in their newspapers poems and stories of life on the road and in this way the emigration folklore expanded. Many of those poems and stories spoke with sadness of having to leave their homeland for unknown places. One poem is representative:

Mom, where's Daddy gone
To bring some money, some bread.
Go to sleep. The house is dark
And cold. How long until tomorrow!

He left for far away America
To work in another country.
The child kept silent thinking
With his childish mind.

And later on, he asked again:
Will he be back tomorrow?
Why had he to go so far away?
Mother, why is there no bread?

Chapter 4

DON'T LOOK BEHIND

One of the greater difficulties encountered in this massive movement of people, was the bitterness of finding-as they crossed the border- that they would not be allwoed to carry on as pedestrians, having no money for boarding a train or a ship, and authorities from all over Europe were sending them back to Romania. From Predeal, three hundred and twenty were rebuked and one hundred and thirty from Mihaileni. In Orsova, a ship carrying eight hundred émigrants was turned back, and in the same Danubian port, a ship with twelve hundred people from Braila and Galatz was also turned back. In the newspaper *Adevarul* (The Truth) of July 11, 1900 it was written: "...a panic stricken population ready to emigrate is terrorized by the authorities." There was news of the arrests of emigrants by the police, and of the inhuman measures taken against these people in the cities. Citizens(especially those with beard) were afraid to walk on the streets for fear of being arrested or savagely beaten. Iasi's weekly *Rasaritul* (The Sunrise) in its September 22-25 edition published the following: "How much is the country paying for its anti-Semitic policy? We cannot apply a policy of strengthening our country and apply anti-Semitic policy at the same time. It is true, anti-Semitism flatters our national self image, but it is also true that a Romanian nation cannot be preserved on the left bank of the Danube River if it is not sustained by a strong government. This is the reason why a good patriot cannot approve this anti-Semitic

policy." The article was signed by C. Radulescu-Motru who would become the President of the Romanian Academy.

At about the same time, a group of Romanian Jews signed a petition to the Parliament asking for the long overdue civil rights that were accorded to them by the Paris Peace Treaty of 1858. They received no reply, but the government took the opportunity to make some money from those interested in obtaining citizenship: They announced that families could file a petition signed by each applicant, that these petitions must be written on special paper carrying the official seal, and that each sheet of this paper would cost the petitioners 25 lei- a large amount of money in those times. It was anticipated that at least 100,000 applicants would sign a petition and thereby bring in a handsome amount of revenue to the always bone dry treasury. Thus the Jews were told they had the right to ask for citizenship without being promised that their requests would find approval. The only certainty was that it would cost them. But few Jews took the bait, and few petitions were filed.

To go back made no sense- they had liquidated their meager assets there- so they began wandering from one border to another hoping to find a break somewhere. At Galatz, the harbor was overcrowded with emigrants who had arrived from cities in Northern Moldavia. As they waited in despair, many crowded the synagogues; around three hundred people found shelter in the Jewish cemetery, and the misery of all could be seen in their faces and read in their eyes.

The high point of the pedestrian emigration was during the months of May and June, 1900; in July of that year, it was forbidden, and the government stopped issuing passports to those who planned to walk because of the bad name being acquired by Romanians abroad. The Cantacuzino government was forced to resign as a result of international public opinion. Emigration by train, however, was still allowed, but the government would issue passports only if the applicants could prove they had tickets for the ocean crossing as well.

At the same time a propaganda campaign started telling the Jews that the economic situation had improved, the crops were good, and they could return to their former places- even to villages from which they had been expelled. Many were unfortunate enough to believe those promises and returned to their villages where they were beaten by the local guards and obliged to leave. Children and women suffered most, some committed suicide, and many died of starvation. Of a group of 1,500 returning emigrants, eight men, twenty-three children, and seventy-five women perished. The authorities forbade public meetings, and an edict was released in all counties stating that the emigrants were to be allowed to wander through the cities, but were to be directed toward border crossings using the shortest routes.

Some Jewish organizations began to help these unfortunates. Land was purchased in the vicinity of Iasi to be farmed by thirty families. The prominent artist Octav Bancila painted his famous work *The Emigrant* which was purchased by public donations and offered as a gift to the B·nai Brith Lodge as a reminder of the

tragedy. Meanwhile, as the well known anti-semite A.C. Cuza was complaining that because of the Jewish departures business was bad and his Jewish tenants in the commercial district could not pay his high rents: so his Jewish real estate brokers were busy hunting for new tenants. Cuza hated Jews, but loved their money. Finally, the Jewish Organization abroad began to send aid, and the emigration of entire families could begin.

In the *New Romanian Revue* Professor C. Radulescu-Motru asked an outstanding Italian personality, Luigi Luzzato, what he thought about the Jewish question in Romania. His answer was published on November 15, 1900. His opinion was that the Romanian Jews had suffered under the restrictive laws which overwhelmed them, but became stronger when they were freed from the chains that had shackled them. He further explained that he had been born a Jew, had given up his faith for many years, but considered returning to it because of the disdain he felt for all kinds of persecution, because of his passion for free thinking, and because of the satisfaction of sacrifying oneself in defense of the oppressed. He said that if he lived in Romania, he would again become a Jew.

Although the pace of emigration slowed, around 16,000 succeeded in leaving between 1900 and 1914, when some attempts were made to revive pedestrian emigration- this time to Australia. In Iasi, there were one hundred young people who had completed their military service and were ready to go. Groups were organized in other cities, but the Minister of Interior used every means to put a stop to the movement. The newspaper *Facla* (The Torch) published a letter from a tinsmith named Saie Hershcovitz

in which he described the state of his affairs: "...Being without money, we decided to walk. Last summer when we marched more than 500 kilometers toward Bulgaria we were allowed to walk and were praised, but now when we want to emigrate we are not allowed. Last year we were showered with flowers, the church bells sounded, and we were blessed by the people. Now we carry on our backs only knapsacks, leaving behind our children and wives in poverty. Now we are leaving dressed as vagabonds, accompanied by the hoots of our former comrades, and carrying on our backs bundles of worn out clothes. That is all we are taking from our country...When I die, I'll ask them to put on my chest the medals I received- The Country's Upsurge (Avintul Tarii) on which is inscribed "The Fatherland's Gratitude" (Patria recunoscatoare).

A Ploiesti newspaper carried: "Regarding the 130 Jews from Galatz on their way toward Brasov, the anti-Semites had the best opportunity to convince themselves about the wealth it was said the Jews were taking with them to foreign countries. They could see with their own eyes the shabby clothes, the torn sandals. And on their unsmiling faces one could see their misery."

Still endlessly seeking escape from the unbearable persecution, Jews looked everywhere for a place where they would be welcomed. In May, 1900 when the pedestrian emigration was in full swing, David Tritsch, a Zionist leader visited Adolph Stern in Romania. He told Stern about his trip to the island of Cyprus and to Constantinople. He thought that emigration there could be the perfect solution- land was cheap, the climate good, and they would receive about 1,000 people. Those Romanian Jews already

settled there had a good life. It could be a first step toward Palestine. Jewish organizations devised plans, as well, for Jewish emigration to Argentina, where huge areas of land were bought and were ready to receive them. In Bucharest, the Society for Aid and Emigration gave aid to the needy. In September, 1900 the last touches were put in Paris on a plan to help one hundred persons leave every week under the supervision of a trained representative. Canada announced its readiness to receive Romanian Jews.

The duplicity of Romania's policy toward Jews was demonstrated by the issue of two laws which were meant to destroy the Jewish population by preventing it from earning a living. The Law of the Rural Police forbade Jews to settle in the villages, and the Law of the Craftsmen restricted foreigners from work in their trades as long as Romanians were working in the same field. According to the statistics of the time, there were 155,000 to 158,000 craftsmen- 68.8% were Romanian, 17.3% were foreign born Christians, and only 13.9% were Jews (foreigners born in Romania) By 1904, over 9,000 of the Jewish artisans had emigrated.

The United States Secretary of State, M. Hay, aware of the anti- Semitic legislation in Romania and its consequences which took so many Jews into the United States, sent a Note to the signing Powers of the Berlin Peace Treaty in 1878 about the citizenship and persecution of Romanian Jews. Known as the Hay Note, his intercession was not sent to the Romanian government. In his Note, Hays spoke of the Romanian Israelites' incapacity to participate in the political life, their exclusion from public

services and other liberal professions, their limitation of their civil rights, the imposition of unbearable taxes, all of these constituting an injustice, painful for the conscience of modern civilized people. He went on to say that many of the trades and their craftshops were prohibited in the already overcrowded cities where they are constrained to live. There was an unending struggle to survive, and as a consequence, the Israelites from Romania were reduced to a state of misery and had little alternative but to suffer in resignation or turn toward another country. Hay's opinion of the emigration was that it was hardly something that people would undertake unless it was necessary and that it was difficult for the Jews of Romania to find a refuge except in America.

On June 28, 1900 Mr. L Descos from the French Legation in Bucharest forwarded a report to his minister in Paris, informing him of the appalling conditions that were making paupers of the Romanian Jews and had them looking toward emigration as their only salvation. A fact which he mentioned was that in most cities- especially those in Moldavia and Eastern Wallachia- the Jews, before departure, met as a group in their synagogues, and swore to stay together in the future wherever they might go. In Paris on June 27 and 28, 1900 a meeting was held by some Jewish organizations and measures for urgently needed aid were set up. In 1902 the Jewish Craftsmen of Bucharest published a manifesto *For Everybody's full Understanding of the Jewish Question in Romania* in which they wrote that according to the latest census 230,000 inhabitants were being deprived of their human rights,

discriminated against by a succession of governments which released law after law- each more revolting than the other. It described a people born and raised in Romania who had been driven from the villages, excluded from the schools, threatened with expulsion, forbidden to hold meetings; considered a plague in their own homeland, they could be hung or drown in the Danube. The *Manifesto* declared that the Jews were enduring the benevolent consequences of modern anti-Semitism unleashed from the uppermost classes down to the slum dwellers. The Jews could not afford to hold any illusions regarding their status among the other inhabitants, and in order to spare the country from further slander from abroad, loyal Jews had only one way to solve the Jewish Question- MASS EMIGRATION.

A French journalist, Bernard Lazare- noted for his brilliant defense of Captain Dreyfus- stopped to visit Romanian Jewish leaders on his way back from Constantinople. He arrived at a time when the pedestrian emigration was at its peak. At his first stop, Iasi, students organized a large public demonstration against him; police, supposed to maintain order did little to stop the students. In Bucharest, Lazare was given some "friendly" advice by the Prime Minister, M. Sturdza, who advised him to stay away from public appearances. For Lazare, the visit made him understand the real situation of the Jews, and on his return to France he wrote a series of articles that were published in the newspaper *Aurore*, about what he had seen and heard. Whereupon, Mr. Ivancu who was the editor in chief of the official Romanian newspaper *Vointa Nationala* (The National Will) invited Rabbi Beck to his office and

asked that he and his fellow Jews provide a written protest to Lazare's articles. This was a ploy used by Romanian politicians- when Romanians were criticized abroad, they demanded that the Jews deny the truth. Rabbi Beck, with dignity, refused.

In the life of any nation there are times that cannot be forgotten, and when remembered, they bring forth old wounds and painful memories. The Peasants' Uprising of 1907 was such a time. It came about after years of accumulated hate propaganda and brought hooligans and hoodlums first in Northern Moldavia and then throughout the country to focus on destroying everything Jewish. In Moldavia alone 2,762 Jewish homes were destroyed along with shops and other businesses. Estimates of the damages were around $2,145,000 francs- and some estimated them higher. The violence was so great, that around 2,000 Jews fled to Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Serbia, or went into hiding until they could emigrate. Some newspapers, even those previously anti-Semitic, changed their reports and took a position against the leaders of the violence. During the worst times of the Uprising, *The Romanian* of March 29, 1907 wrote: "Iorga must resign from his chair (as university professor) it'll be shameful for the Romanian nation to delegate to him the education of its children. There is no pardon for the crimes committed by Mr. Iorga. He has to suffer the consequences of his deeds." On June 4 the Iasi newspaper *The Liberal* wrote: "A.C. Cuza is the enemy of the country, a black hearted reactionary, a man who fought all his life against democracy and has been able to become a deputy by riding the old horse of anti-semitism. He lectures at the University in a kind of

jargon. Imitating the way some speak the Jewish language, corrupting the youth and estranging them from studying. Each vote given to this infamous reactionary, this traitor of our nation, is a treason against the nation." At the same time, in an interview given to the *European Courier,* N. Iorga declared: "The Jews are the cause of the disorders. Our peasants don't steal, and in Moldavia they killed no one." The figures shown above are just part of the reality Iorga knew, but did not care to admit. The list of cities and villages, of households and their Jewish owners, is long- it is hard to write about, and even more difficult to read.

When the fires had burned down, the King ordered that the peasants be pardoned. On September 20, 1907 jurors acquitted those who had murdered Talic Bergenstein from Paulesti although the six charged with the crime had been identified as the guilty ones. Asked about the decision, a peasant responded: "What did we do? We got rid of a kike." From all over Europe aid arrived for the battered Jews- from Vienna alone came 20,876 lei. Those funds were too little to allow any help, except emigration.

In 1906 Nicolae Iorga had founded the newspaper *Neamul Romanesc* (The Romanian People). It became for years the torchbearer of intolerance and anti-Semitism so that generations of Romanians grew up hearing his doctrine of bigotry. Together with A.C. Cuza he founded The National Democratic Party with the swastika as its symbol. Their ideology became the cornerstone for anti-Semitism in Romania for years to come. At first it was a political movement known mainly among the intellectuals in the

cities, but after 1907 and the genesis of *Neamul Romanesc* their ideology penetrated the villages. The French ambassador to Romania, A Henry, said: "..Anti-Semitism is not just a public opinion in Romania, it is a passion in which politicians of all parties-representing everyone from the Orthodox Church to the peasants-are united."

From the time of its foundation in 1909, the Union of Native Jews (Uniunea Evreilor Pamanteni) became the representative of the Jewish population. Its voice was not a vigorous one but, facing the events of 1912-1913 it sent a memorandum to the government "asking that the Jewish population be allowed to participate in the combat. In its communication it stressed that the Jews wanted to be considered unified with the Romanian people, and ready to do its duty until the very end."

The coalition of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro against Turkey in 1912 brought Romania into the conflagration, and on July 1, 1913 its troops were marching toward Sophia. As always in hours of need, the Jewish population- although its status as citizens was unchanged- asked through their representatives to be allowed to join the fight. In the Balkan campaign 25,000, including many young boys and girls, volunteered wherever they were needed. Jewish synagogues were transformed into hospitals and about four million lei went toward the war effort.

Many distinguished Romanian politicians expressed their approval for recognizing Jewish citizenship, saying that their actions were not an act of generosity, but a citizen's duty. When the Peace Conference was convened in Bucharest, Jews hoped their

citizenship would be recognized, but the issue was not raised, and the much debated Jewish Question was buried once more in the piles of papers on the Conference tables. Enthusiasm died down and in 1914 a new law was passed- The Law Regarding the Control of Foreigners- which stated that all Jews living in border areas could be expelled from their homes for the "safety" of the country.

A harsh wind started to blow above the bent heads of these second category of people living in this country. The gates of the 20th century were open but the Jews were still on the threshold of history, carrying on their shoulders the heavy load of discrimination. In the soul of each Jew was deeply rooted the Fear. It was paralyzing his will; breaking his personality; subduing his élan; suppressing the aspirations. Listening with the heart on his mouth, the menacing roar of hooligans from the streets, the noise of broken glass, the screams and moans of those attacked and beaten; the flames which put on torch their homes; the enlished packs of wolves entering their dwellings, plundering and raping; their powerlessness to act and protect themselves and their families; looking for help and finding understanding and compassion only among their own.

From the childhood, the smiles were stolen from their faces; until the early years they had to learn to shut up; to accept to be mocked without complaining. The only one thing they were able to do was to cry in silence.

The youngsters had the dreams stiffed, the wings of buoyancy cut off by accepting the humiliating conditions as a tolerate and

not as an equal among others, without the right to ask, to pretend, or to impose himself.

Those gray-haired ones didn't have anything more left but submission and resignation. A knock on the door late in the night, brought horror and Fear. Echoes about pogroms somewhere arrived, together with reverberations of Fear ; anytime could happen here too. Fear was the feeling with which the Jewish population from Romania opened the door of the 20th century, looking for a safe place under the sun. And still so many reasons of Fear were shelved for each of them.

The Jews were always accused not to assimilate; but when they tried to do it, they were rejected, accused that they don't toil the land, and never allowed to settle in the country. They could not send their children to the public schools, unless paying heavy taxes, but those students could not be promoted among other children according to their achieved knowledge, being first of all just Jews. The text books with anti-Semitic slurs were used in their curriculum, even in their proper Jewish schools.

The anti-Semitic propaganda was always talking of hundred of thousand of Jews living in the country; the National Census of 1899 showed only 266,652. Someone could image that the figures were fixed to please the Jewish leaders. It was the truth; and most of them had been living for centuries in this country. But those arbitrary laws decided: The Jews are foreigners, and nobody was able to remove this rock from their backs. The Jewish youngsters served under regiment flags and went to fight in Romania's wars together with all their Romanian comrades in arms.

They fought for the country, and many died for it. Their names are still forgotten in old regimental archives, together with the distinctions earned on the battle fields. But everything was washed up by the passing of time, and malevolence of many. Posters glued on the walls talked to those who stopped in front of them:"...Christian brothers from Alexandria, we ask you in the name of Christian dignity, don't enter the kikes shops...It will be shameful that your clothes will touch the floor of our Churches, cloths which were touched by their leprosic hands." And Alexandria was a small town on the border of the River Danube with a little Jewish community.

The anti-Semite Tita Pavelescu was well recognized preaching all over the land: "kill the Kikes!" Most prestigious names from all ways of science, culture, etc. were in the same time the most outspoken anti-Semites. In the columns of newspapers, from the restrooms in the public places, from the University chairs, everywhere possible, one could hear the voices of political leaders of so called democratic parties at the time; writers of great prestige beyond poems of sensibility and delicacy, wrote plays infested with the poison of hatred against the Jews. The historian Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, a prominent personality in the field of culture, was well known by his anti-Semitic outbursts, forgetting his Jewish Grandmother. But if those slum dwellers, poor peasants, little clerks always looked for a new and better position, people without a profession but great specialists in beating the Jews did it because hating Jews was a "profitable" profession. In the meantime, people could be asked- why, despite

their high positions, they used their thundering voice and powerful pen to attract the masses to anti-Semitism as a weapon to climb easily the steps of power? The way in which those personalities looked to the Jews and their so called "problem" demonstrated the fact that they had a profound distrust in the capacity of their own people and overestimated the value of the Jews as a people. They did everything which was in their power to get rid of the Jews because they didn't accept competition. They wanted to get rid of the Jews, to be just by themselves: no competition in any field. To fulfil this old and worn-up program all means were used, especially to attract the masses, the hungry, sick and illiterate masses which were educated to see and accept the fact that the Jew is evil.

Of course, in the Romanian cultural and scientific spectrum were high personalities with courage and dignity who didn't just try to defend the Jew, but the Romanian dignity and prestige abroad, as well.

This time the State authorities attention shifted from the surveillance of those poor Jews looking toward emigration as a salvation, to the Jewish intellectuals, trying to uproot them from the land or at least to make them shut up, and never dare to criticize the government, and its attitude toward the Jewish problem. Elias Schwartzfeld, one of those expelled from the country, struggled all his life against these arbitrary measures. A day before leaving the country, he wrote in his newspaper an article, a kind of farewell to friends and foes. As some used to say: "People left Romania, but Romania still lives in their soul

and body. "Schwartzfeld said:"...I'm a Romanian Jew born in this country, in Iasi, growing up in the schools of the country. Because I didn't enjoy any protection I was expelled. And in spite of those, the same government considered me one of its citizens because in 1878, I went to finish the studies abroad. What is really true is that the liberal government didn't like me, even now, because I criticized its hateful and barbarian behavior against the Jews.... I protested against my country, although I loved it like a faithful son, against this arbitrary attitude. I'm protesting against lawfulness committed against myself and against my brothers. I Shall leave because I am compelled to, but I'm not going to give up. I care for my fellows. I love my country and I will never forget them... I don't say goodbye to my country, I say to all of them: so long!

In the columns of newspapers a question arose: "Why the Jews are emigrating, and not the Romanians?" The answer was clear, reflecting the social status of the Jewish community. In the weekly "Egalitatea" was published an article in which an answer was given to this question: "because the Jews represent the working class in our country," And some examples to illustrate this assertion followed: in the county of Dorohoi there were 1424 craftsmen out of which 763 were Jews; in the county of Botosani there were 863 craftsmen (528 Jews); in the county of Suceava were 870 craftsmen (466 Jews). The others were foreigners of different nationalities and religions, and few Romanians. Regarding this state of facts, in the newspaper "Adevarul" of May 5, 1900, Al. Nichifor wrote an article, "Emigration from Iasi," stressing out

some interesting and worrisome aspects: "Not long ago in Iasi flourished the furniture industry. Iasi was known for this craftsmanship of manufacturing elegant furniture, and everything which could be considered a Parisian "nouveauté," was found in a long string of shops of Aron Voda street. Today, this industry vanished completely, and the shops in which hundreds of people found work, are now closed. As a matter of fact, all those who left were craftsman and the peril consist in the fact that the Romanians don't like to do this kind of work."

Regarding those empty streets, newspapers wrote about those in Tulcea, from where more than 170 families left for America. In Botosani, many houses were without tenants; in Babadag the main commercial street was totally emptied of shops and customers. As professor Alexandru Claudian said: "The Jews are not hated for their shortcomings, but for their qualities..." and concluded as a joke: "hide away your intellectual and moral qualities, hide away your social virtues."

The Jews from Romania didn't stop in their wanderings in one place only. We can find them or their offspring in Canada, Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, South Africa, Australia, etc. In the United States, between 1899-1903, 22,876 Jews emigrated; in 1904, there were 35,000. Emigrants used to stick together, living in the same neighborhoods which carried names after their former cities of departure: Iasi, Botosani, Barlad, etc. A newspaper "Curierul Romano-American" published for its readers news from Romania and from other places where could be found Jews originating from Romania. With the help of Foundation Baron Hirsch many newcomers

were helped to make their first steps. In the "mom and pop" shop signs showed who the owner was, and what kind of customers he was looking for: "The Romanian Milkshop"; "The Winery of Odobesti"; "The Romanian Pharmacy," etc. Restaurants with Romanian cuisine were everywhere, and became places where people socialized. A tailor wrote on his windows shop: "For the Romanians from America, great discounts; for Romanians visiting America, free alterations."

As early as 1840, according to the testimony of a few American Romanian Jews, some Romanian from Bombay, hearing of fortunes built in North America and not finding India to their liking, sailed for New York. Arriving at their destination, they thought themselves the pioneers of Romanian Jewry in the American Continent, but they were told that others of the same type, came there before.

Diligent inquiry fails to ascertain the exact names, occupation, and dates of the early comers. However, it remains an undisputed fact that even the sporadic emigration of Romanian Jews to the United States did not begin much earlier than 1850. As late as 1870, a Romanian Jewish immigrant might wander about the country for months without meeting one of his countrymen. But after 1877, the emigration to America began to increase. The religious cohesion that manifested itself in the building up of separate congregations was very late in coming. This strange behavior, so different from the course pursued by other Jewish immigrants, can be explained. The early comers from Romania were nearly all unmarried men and rather lax in the matter of religious

conformity. They were indifferent to religious practices, when they intermarried Jews from other countries, they allowed themselves to be absorbed by the congregations to which the families of their wives belonged. Despite all these, the migration to America continued to be sporadic. From 1878 until 1882, the immigration gradually increased from 262 to 1052, 40% of the whole number being women and children. In the next year, 1883, there was a decrease of a hundred, and since that time, although there was a constant increase, its percentage was irregular. This irregular course continued until 1900, when the Romanian Jewish immigration reached amazing proportions.

During all these years, although Romanian Jews went to nearly every part of the United States and Canada, the city of New York was and still remains the goal of their wanderings. Almost all the Romanian Jews in America were either residents of New York, or had passed through the metropolis seeking their fortunes elsewhere. This rule has been broken only since 1900, when well-known European benevolent associations transported a considerable number of the Romanian wanderers to Canadian shores.

After all, the bulk of Romanian Jewish immigrants still remain in New York, and peculiarities of their survived expatriation can nowhere be studied better than in the metropolis, in which they have established congregations and societies, and developed individual features. As soon as the more orthodox Jews began to arrive, and some of them became prosperous in world affairs, they thought to indulge in the luxury of a synagogue of their own, and they devoted themselves to the foundation of

societies, on the shape of those they had in their Romanian home. But much before those satisfactions of spiritual cravings, and as early as 1884 two Romanians occupied a basement on Hester Street, where they manufactured grape wine, and served it in Romanian fashion. Then, they installed a complete Romanian kitchen, bringing about everything a Romanian palate could want. Others were encouraged to follow suit, and Romanian wine houses, bakeries, and many others became lucrative business in New York.

Maybe in the same period of time the world known song "O, Romania, Romania" swept on their feet the audiences in the packed halls. In the same year, a few youths established the "Roumanisch-Americanisher Brüderbund," for the purpose, as set forth in their Constitution, of devoting themselves to the study of social science.

At the end of 1885 a score of Romanian Jews assembled in a meeting decided to hire a hall on the Bowery to hold religious service in the manner they were accustomed in the old country. They called themselves simply: "The First Romanian American Congregation" without the usual addition of a Hebrew name. The congregation consisted of about fifteen members, who were not enough blessed with worldly goods to purchase a scroll of the law; they had to hire one from a Hebrew book-dealer on Canal Street.

The Jews in Romania were accustomed to resort to the synagogue on Saturdays at their leisure, as a place in which to meet and converse with friends and acquaintances not met during the week. Once established in America, they longed for the old time synagogue which was their club as well. In the new

conditions, if a Romanian Jew wanted to see any one of his countrymen, he was sure to find him there, or at least meet someone who knew his whereabouts. And in the synagogue, foreign and domestic policies were discussed, and above all the fate of those left behind in Romania. The second congregation was established in 1893 followed by the congregation "Kehal Adath Yeshurum" and the "Yassier Sheel" established in 1897. It may be said that the Romanian Jews were not very successful in forming congregations in America. They preferred the coffee-houses, wine-cellars and restaurants, to meet people and socialize. Regarding the religious body, they preferred the congregations formed by the South Russians and especially those from Bessarabia.

As early as the beginning of 1889, there were already a number of Romanian Jews in New York who were proud of their American citizenship. When they visited their newly-arrived compatriots, they would display the document that entitled them to participate in the political affairs of the United States. The dream of the Romanian Jew, to be a naturalized citizen, was at last realized. When be was able to grasp the new situation, he did not pride himself of his citizenship, but looked back with horror and contempt upon his native land which had denied him his rights. Besides the oath swore before the American Judge, he took another one: never to desert the country of his adoption. It is a fact that in devotion to the country, the naturalized Romanian Jew in America outpasses almost every other foreign Jew. The probable reason is that the Romanian Jew has suffered more by being

considered an alien in the country of his birth than any other persecuted Jew of the present days.

Those first new citizens called a meeting at 104 Orchard Street and after a short debate concluded to form a political organization. They had been told that unless they took sides with the one or another party, their organization would be a mere farce. A young student, just arrived from Bucharest to joint his family, requested permission to speak. The young orator delivered a moving speech referring to Abraham Lincoln: "...And now my dear countrymen, this noble American, this friend of the enslaved and the oppressed, was a member of the Republican party." Louis Diamant was able to reach the peak of the enthusiasm, and the whole audience sent a standing ovation and said in Romanian: "Traiasca memoria lui Lincoln" - "Long live the memory of Lincoln." Later, Diamant became a leader of the congregation of the Jews from Romania and a well known attorney in New York. In 1891 the party was re-organized as "The Democratic Club."

The Jews in Romania were very fond of <u>their</u> theatre. It was a part of their life, and many times the actors still belonging to their communities, left their professions, following in their wandering life, those Jewish actors, known by name and even by nicknames. In those tours, they tried to make a living in a profession where the struggle for a little piece of bread was a common way of life staying alive. When the audience left, the actors followed too.

It is proper to devote some space to the Romanian-Jewish actors, who began to arrive in New York as early as 1881. They

played in a concert hall, on the Bowery, at that time known as the "Oriental Theatre." At the end of 1886, the best Jewish company of actors and actresses came to New York, and took up their headquarters at another concert hall, renamed in their honor: "The Romanian Opera House." The company soon attracted the attention of the entire Jewish population of New York; nevertheless the income was not sufficient to support the members of the troupe, and they suffered many hardships.

This company of actors was fully equipped with plays, wardrobe, scenery, and even playwrights from Romania. In fact, it may be said that the Yiddish press and literature, though not founded by Romanian Jews, owe their present material and literary success, to Romanian Jewish influence.

After a few years living in America, the Romanian Jews started not just organizing religious congregations, but especially associations of mutual help, medical care, homes for the aged and so on. The First Aid Association was organized in 1885 and carried on many years as "The American Star," under the leadership of a former cobbler who plunged into business, as a peddler, and later opened a saloon; in few years, he accumulated a little fortune. He was himself almost illiterate, but he loved men of education, and he sought their company and advice. A movement which attracted great attention throughout the country was started by a Romanian Jew named Jacob Ochs. He organized several masonic lodges, but after four years of unceasing labor, he was arrested and accused of fraud, and of collecting fees for a society without authorization. Later on, in 1916, Dr. Adolph Kraus, the president

of the Order Bnai Brith, organized "The American Union of Romanian Jews" and Dr. Pierre A. Siegelstein was elected President, and Mr. Edward Herbert as secretary. One of the main goals of this society was: "...to take care of the interest of the Jews from Romania and those of America of their political emancipation and of economical rehabilitation." After a short period of time, the association was reorganized under the name of "The United Romanian Jews of America." At the beginning the number of members were 12,000. The main task of the "Union" was from the beginning purely political, but later had a powerful social character. One of those institutions was "Jewish Home for the Aged" and "Jewish House for the Convalescents." Those leaving the hospital and deprived of means for proper care, were helped in those institutions until their recovery.

The occupations of the Romanian Jews in the United States do not differ materially from the occupations of others, with the exception of their wine-cellars, coffee-houses, and restaurants. On the whole, it should be said, the Romanian Jewish spirit is commercial, although 35% of the immigrants were craftsmen, mainly tailors and carpenters. Among them there were successful merchants with establishments not only on Canal Street in New York, but also in Maiden Lane and Broadway. They were engaged in the wholesale diamond and woolen trades, and in the banking business on Wall Street.

Romanian Jewish young men who came with their parents, after having striven in Romania to attain one of the learned professions, took up special studies immediately upon their

arrival, and qualified themselves as physicians, lawyers, dentists, and engineers. From the stages of the Jewish Theatres, another generation of young artists made their way to the movies, and is proper to remind just Edward Robinson, Clara Young, and many others. Above 10% of East Side lawyers and physicians in New York are from Romania, or their parents came from there. The dentistry seems to be a profession which attracted those young students, in the famous Philadelphia Institution. In 1915, a building was remodeled in a school for Jewish children. More than 350 boys and girls attended the courses free of charge, and the Hebrew language, religion, history, and literature of the Jewish people had large audiences.

The Romanian café as well as the Romanian wine-cellars and restaurants were managed in New York more or less in the same way as in Romania. The Romanian Jews gathered at these public houses for many purposes, besides eating and drinking. They served as meeting places for friends, where they discussed business and social matters, and where, in Oriental fashion, over a cup of black coffee and through the blue smoke curling up from their cigarettes, they indulged in a game of cards or chess. The café became a perfect innocent resort, and it was the only place at which the Romanian Jew found pleasure. Lately, the custom was to have Romanian music in the public houses, and another touch is thus added to the homelike surroundings, arising sweet memories.

With the growth of the Romanian Jewish population, the wealth of the earlier immigrants increased. The situation of their brethren in Romania appealed to their generosity, and under the

leadership of Dr. P.A. Siegelstein, a well known physician in New York, "The Romanian Hebrew Aid Association" was formed. In 1900, this association helped 1362 persons to reach the American shores. The area of activity of this association was especially to help the newcomers to settle down and start their fight for existence.

By a moderate estimation, at the beginning of the 20th century there were on the American soil around 40,000 Jews from Romania, 25,000 of whom more living in Greater New York. They are as their forebears an industrious class of people, and grasp every opportunity to Americanize themselves. They have a proper appreciation of American institutions, and learn to speak and read the English language in a shorter time than other foreigners. They regard the United States as their permanent home, and they worked hard to be seen and appreciated as such. From the beginning of this century, Jewish immigrants from Romania started to be well known in various professions. Just a few: David Adler arriving from Piatra Neamt became a well known owner of newspapers; George Bernard, the owner of a chain of stores specialized in ladies clothing, was known for his profound love for Romania. Every time when a Romanian artist, performer, etc. happened to be in New York, Bernard tried to meet, and help him. In the medical field, Romanian Jews had a solid position, and personalities as Mark Blank, Pierre A. Siegelstein and many others worked hard in their profession and especially in public activities in order to help their community.

Konrad Bercovici was famous by his works in literary field, and his novels enjoyed a wide range of readers. Romanian Jews had

a solid position in the American media, and professors at the highly prestigious universities, originally from Romania were well appreciated.

The sufferings, humiliation were forgotten somehow. It is in human nature. Romanians visiting the United States always tried to meet immigrants, knowing that they will be welcome. A lawyer from Iasi named Stanislas Cihoski together with general C. Pilat were visiting New York. Shortly, people learned about their arrival, and the two visitors were invited everywhere with great pride and joy. In this time, a new synagogue was inaugurated, and the guests invited to the ceremony of the opening. The synagogue chorus sang Romanian folksongs and Cihowski was so impressed he promised that when back in Iasi, he will tell the people: "Awake up Romanians from your century- old stupid anti-Semitism and look what we lost." Nobody knows for sure if he held up his promises, but at last he said it. The great performers Agatha Barsesco, George Enesco and many others kept wonderful memories regarding their arrival and stay in the United States, and the way in which they were received by the Romanian Jews. The visit in the late twentieth of the Queen Mother Maria in the States and the warm welcome received from the Jewish population, immigrants from Romania, could not be forgotten.

Interesting was the visit made by Nicolae Iorga in America. Arriving at the customs, he was astonished that the gentleman from the counter addressed and talked to him in a clear Romanian language. He was William Feder, a Jew from Galati who emigrated as "pedestrian" more than thirty years ago. At the banquet offered to

Iorga by those immigrants, their President, Leo Wolfshom, said: "I'll never forget the love and pity showed by the peasants from the village of Dragomiresti...They helped us with milk, wine, eggs etc. saying to us: "The country is so big, why do you must leave?" Professor Iorga was profoundly moved by what he saw and heard and before departing for Romania said: "In the Jewish Romanian colony, I found feelings about our country so alive, which could move anybody. Contrary to the accusations spread in Romania, the Jews never slandered the country, but they used any opportunity to express their love for our people. I found all of those visits on the streets very interesting: I could find at each step writings in our language..."

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During WWI, after a period of neutrality, Romania joined in 1916 the Western Powers - in spite of a secret alliance with Germany signed in 1883. Over 30,000 Jews joined the ranks of the Romanian army, yet only a few months after the war began, hundreds of Jewish families were evacuated from the border areas because of the suspicion that they might be German spies, and the label applied to the Jewish soldiers who fought bravely and well, was "German collaborators."

The Jewish contribution in bloodshed for the war effort could not be disputed but still there were voices who tried to do just that- and all too often they were heard. Despite the manipulations of the Romanian representatives at the Paris Peace Conference,

Romania did sign the Treaty of Versailles, and in 1919 it signed the Treaty of Saint Germain which dealt with the minorities, their citizenship, and their status in Romanian society. On March 28, 1923, despite powerful opposition, Parliament voted to include the emancipation of the Jews in the Constitution, and the famous Article 7 was replaced by Article 133. These were important events for the Romanian Jews; however they remembered that only the intercession of foreign powers in the Paris Treaty of 1858 had enacted that all inhabitants should receive equal rights, while the Romanians, having labeled the Jews a Foreign Nation, deemed them as not eligible. In the Berlin Treaty that had granted independence to Romania, Jews had received their emancipation as an essential condition- again thanks to outside powers. At that time Kogalniceanu had said: "A country with one hundred thousand people without civil rights has one hundred thousand enemies." He continued: "The Convention [the Paris Treaty of 1858] granted rights to Armenians, Catholics, and Lutherans living in Romania: and now Article 44 for the Berlin Treaty is granting rights to Jews thanks to the European powers. In this way, unfortunately, most social problems have been resolved not by the Romanian Parliament but under the pressure of foreign powers." In 1923 it was thanks to French pressure at the Peace Conference at Versailles that the rights were granted. None of those acts changed the anti-Semitic sentiments held by much of the Romanian population, and in 1923 they merely kept silent until the chance to regroup should come.

While the negotiations regarding the Jews' status were going on, the frequency and virulence of attacks against them increased. Propaganda was circulated by the political parties- some with democratic platforms, but most with loud anti-Semitic feelings. Groups that espoused all levels of fascist ideology organized a range of "fronts," "guards," and "leagues." To implement their programs they would even use bullets along with their slogans. The media was a powerful tool in the struggle- with its voice largely allied on the side of circumventing the rights and freedoms granted by the new Constitution.

It is significant that, following World War I, the spite of new anti-Jewish legislation stopped. This cessation was not due to any change of heart by the Romanian government, but occurred because Romania was bound by its signature on the Treaty of St. Germain and it had become an embarrassment to be the country pointed at again and again for its persecution of minorities. However, the true situation was known by all. Faithful to the old habits and in response to demands from the political parties, an avalanche of secret instructions and circulars was sent to local authorities who tempered the provisions of Article 133 in the new Constitution. The Jewish deputies elected to Parliament after the war had to struggle to be heard; a speech made by one of them at the time, gave a picture of the reality in which the Jews were existing when he spoke of how Jews lived outside protection from the law: "Many of the brutalities that have been committed have gone unpunished. Jewish students are mistreated and the guilty ones are not disciplined, so it is popular

knowledge that everyone can do what they want against the Jewish population. It is regrettable that the government stands by with its arms crossed in the presence of everything that is instigated against the Jewish minority."

Emigration was reduced to a trickle because the whole spectrum of Jewish life was changed in the 1920s and early 1930s. Legal citizenship had opened the door to higher education, and the younger generation hoped its way of life would change for the better. An era of prosperity, and the development of commerce and industry kept Jews employed, and the general belief was that things were improving. If something unpleasant did happen the prevailing attitude was that "it didn't happen to me." The United States had closed its gates to substantial emigration, and the British were keeping entry to Palestine under tight control. Some enthusiastic Zionists, mostly educated young people, managed to get into Eretz Israel - but they were only a few.

Hatred exploded again in the 1930s. Hitler came to power, a Prime Minister was riddled with bullets on a railroad platform in Romania one Christmas Eve, and cities and universities became hotbeds of public unrest. The accession of Goga-Cuza's fascist party to power in 1937 opened the way for German influence to penetrate Romania- where anti-Semitic laws were already in place. The terms of the Saint Germain Treaty were forgotten.

On ships and even in small boats, Jews started crossing the Black Sea to seek relief. The Constitution of 1923 was abrogated and the "Judicial Statute for the Jews in Romania" was instituted. It cited a list of discriminatory laws that effectively cancelled

the period of equal rights the Jews had enjoyed between 1923 and 1940.

Starting with the "Nation Party" that had clear fascist ideals, through the "National Legionar State" under the leadership of General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu, the mass of anti-Semitic legislation that was strictly applied, was a re-emergence unprecedented in its magnitude of the old traditional anti-Semitism that had such deep roots in the Romanian psyche. Nothing was new— the proportions were simply greater and caused more pain. One of the reasons given by some essayists is that what happened in Romania was not a Holocaust, but that they saw nothing in what really had occurred. The stubbornness with which they rejected the truth can be laid to the incredible lack of available information, in an era of effective communication. Moreover, the government policy of tight lips regarding the Holocaust can be partially explained if one considers that it was- and still is- a truth which is hard to swallow for a nation whose leaders have at all periods of history incited the population against the Jews.

Starting in 1940, the Jews remaining in the small towns of Moldavia were evacuated and sent in long convoys- on foot or packed into horse carts with their meager belongings-- to the major city of each county. The reason for this movement was to concentrate them at one location within each county where they could be better supervised by the local police as well as by the dreaded security police. That was to be only the first step in a long list or brutal acts to be carried out under the legionar government with such fierceness that they surpassed everything

done before. Consider the pogrom of January 1941 in Bucharest, the massacre at Iasi; the mass murders at Rosovanu Rock; the sweep of death which fell on the villages and cities of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Northern Moldavia; the extradition of Jews under the label "vagabonds" starting in the fall of 1941. The craftsmen, tradesmen, and scholars alike were deported from their places in the territories across the Dniestr; 292,809 were sent in Transnistria by the Romanians and 148,172 from Northern Transylvania were sent in Poland by the Germans and by the Hungarians. The "cleansing of the territory" policy ordered by Antonescu at the beginning of the war surpassed anything done to Romania's Jews in the past.

Still no new legislation was needed. The leaders of the country did what former leaders had done and brought out the old legislation to be adapted to new realities. Evacuations, pillages, expulsions, deportations, all were carried out by leaders who had been taught to hate. For the first time Jewish men were not asked to fight within the Romanian army for the Fatherland, but their contribution to the war machinery amounted to billions. Yet even with evidence of the inhumane treatment accorded to the Romanian Jews, the Romanian people have never seen their actions as a Holocaust, but rather as a continuation of life as it had always been- with laws regarding the Jews strenuously enforced - but with nothing new that could make one consider that they had been a part of the Holocaust.

BOOK THREE

THE GREAT ESCAPE

CHAPTER 5

THE WORLD BEHIND

In the spring of 1944 the Soviet Army in full swing occupied Bukovina and Bessarabia and stopped in the Northern part of Moldavia, in the Botosani county. Before these events, an order released by the Romanian government stated that the administration at all levels had to leave in a hurry, evacuating Moldavia and heading toward the Southern part of the country. In this way Moldavia became practically a deserted province. Those left behind were poor people, old, retired, and mostly Jews who managed to arrive back in their cities, from camps of labor or detention. Together, they started to organize from scratch the livelihood which could supply food and other means of subsistance for the entire population.

A real flood of paper currency printed by the Russians named "Russian Lei" were brought in by the Soviet commandment to be used by the soldiers. Later this currency was exchanged with Romanian money at the same rate, contributing to the collapse of the Romanian financial and economical system.

The advancement of the Soviet Army in Moldavia with the offensive towards Iasi, persuaded King Michael I to order the high ranking officers at hand, and the Palace Guard to arrest Antonescu and some of his fellows. Those events brought important changes in the life of the country and to its population, and especially for the Jewish communities. This reference is for the Transnistria survivors; those from Northen Transylvania, deported to Auschwitz by the Germans and by the Hungarians; survivors of the labor

camps; those who were spared to be sent to compulsory work but carried on the heavy burden of paying billions for the so called "compensations." The consequences of these actions aimed against Jews and everything that happened in the life of this community, should be looked upon as to the disappearing of the almost entire Jewish population from the territory of Romania. In less than half a century later still lived there a shrinking number of survivors who carried on a precarious existence, asking themselves and other alike, if there was a reason to stay among people who didn't want them in the past, and who rejected them even nowadays.

The Southward Offensive carried on by the Soviets had this time as a new ally their former enemies: the Romanian Army! From South to North, heading to the places where they once lived, the evacuated population returned as well as the whole administration. From the beginning an unexpected situation arose, and nobody could foresee it: it was a kind of "duality of power" where in the same offices performed those returned employees, and those who stayed in place and carried on, working hard, giving to the daily existence a reason to be, and fulfilling their chores. These "ratio of forces" headed to a kind of collision in which the Jews realized that they were not wanted anymore.

In the direct relationship between Jews and Romanians, especially those who arrived lately, many looked for a kind of friendship in which nobody really believed. What was clear, was the reality: the cities left in a hurry and in shambles, by order or by cowardice, by a part of a population with a long past of anti-Semitism, welcomed those people with open arms. Life in the

out under the legionary government with such fierceness that they surpassed ~~all that~~ gone ~~on~~ before. Consider the pogrom of January 1941 in Bucharest,the massacre at Iasi; the mass murderes at Rosonvanu Rock ; the sweep of death which fell on the villages and cities of Bukovina,Bessarabia and Northern Moldova;the extraditions of Jews under the label "vagabonds" starting in the fall of 1941. The craftsmen, tradesmen and scholars alike were deported from their places in the territories across the ~~Nistru~~- 292.809 were sent in Transnistria by the Romanians and 148.172 from Northern Transylvania were sent in Poland by the Germans and Hungarians. The "cleansing of the territory" policy ordered by Antonescu at the beginning of the war surpassed anything done to Romania's Jews in the past.

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abandoned cities started flickering again. The electricity was working; tap water was running; the telephones were again operational; the markets loaded with vegetables. The cities became alive. This was done with the direct participation of the Jewish population as well. Some of them took over positions of leadership in cities or counties together with other people. On the kitchen tables of those evacuees, now back at their homes, was bread and often something else too.

What could be said, generally speaking, after the war about the attitude towards the Jews, could be safely underlined that it had a kind of evolutive character, always reflecting the internal political events. The notion of being a Jew owing to years of propaganda, could not be separated by that of "Judeo-Communist." The Judeo-Communism being the typical and the last label bestowed on this population long before the war, and mostly used under Antonescu's dictatorship. After the war, this word still in "circulation" but just whispered, was replaced by the cynical "Mister Jew" or something similar. It was an "elegant" but opportunistic slur, an attitude used to show that Jews holding in those circumstances the "power" had to be flattered to make them new friends who would soon forget the harshness of those who had crushed them under torrents of discrimination. When realizing that the Jews practically were powerless- but with good memories- they turned their back, trying to renew old practices. What should be underlined is the fact that although the Romanians contemplated all Jews as communists, the Jewish communists didn't consider themselves as Jews! For most of them, their roots were viewed as

an embarrassing ancestry of which all wanted to get rid of by all means and at any cost. Returning from the evacuations, the Romanians had to live suddenly under Russian occupation for which they had for centuries only contempt and hate; considering the Jews as "conquerons," charging them as being the only ones who "brought" the Russian Army into Romania. With the passing years, this aberration deepened its roots in the Romanian psyche, and was felt in the life of the Jews. Among so many "guilts" poured over this population, another one was taken over by the anti-Semitic terminology and used thoroughly.

The goal of attracting in the Communist Party prominent Jewish personalities, having in mind especially the intellectuality of all kind of training, constituted from the beginning of the new rule, a desire wanted to be fulfilled at once. It was well known in that specific period of time that if a Jew was hired in a representative position, it was a guarantee that he has never been a fascist; those who offered the job had the certitude that he'll always have near him a high trained fellow, hard working and with good manners; in the meantime- and most important- he was boasting a sort of "degree" in Democracy, showing to everyone that he was not a man ruled by racial prejudices. There were times when it was useful to have nearby a Jew, when everyone felt that so many things belonging to the past were better not be talked about!

This attitude was mirrored in the human relationship, having in mind clear goals, and overnight advantages. It was shortly transposed on a larger scale, with consequences for the whole

Jewish population. The traditional institution which earned among the masses a well deserved reputation, became over the years the object of anti-Jewish attacks. Trying to change this perception, a first step was taken by the new administration after Antonescu's fall: the abolishment of the Jewish Centrale and reinstating the old "Federation of the Union of Jewish Communities" in short "The Federation." In the past, this institution had a leadership always democratic elected, and now it found itself for the first time in a position of working under orders and pressures. The "New Forces" gave up their place and struggle in exchange for some perks, which represented just a sequent of the population. But they wanted to have complete control over the Federation, which should accept to become a silent and obedient partner.

The loud demagogy of those new organizations was felt directly, because this attitude had nothing to do with the traditional way of life and behavior of the Federation's leadership in the midst of the Jewish communities. In all those places and even in remote cities, communist organizations were active in keeping an open eye to what happened around, conveying the "news" to the higher steps of the Party. In their "normal" activity of holding a tide gripe and conquering the Jewish body, those groupings changed their activities according to the situation. Unified by the desire to choose their representatives in the "Jewish street," the new organizations became "The Jewish Democratic Committee" abbreviated "CDE." In its future activity CDE took full advantage of the divergences with deep roots which still existed between W. Filderman and A.L. Zissu. This state of

facts was added to the schism among the Zionist organization itself. In those circumstances CDE became a kind of shelter for those opportunistic elements. Eventually, regardless of this "activity," Filderman was re-elected President of the Federation, but CDE took care to have him surrounded by dubious people whose mission was to hinder his activity. Unfortunately, one cannot look over the fact that when Filderman was arrested for the first time in 1946 and jailed in the famous prison Malmaison in Bucharest, a big emptiness surrounded him. His former assistants were noticed by their absence and silence. It seemed that those Jewish personalities weren't ready yet to take strong and dignified position in the struggle to release Filderman from the prison. One of the few who did it, was Bernard Rohlich, the President of the Zionist Organization. The intercessions of Chief Rabbi Dr. Safran with the President Groza were of real help. But CDE didn't stop for an instant the campaign against Filderman. This time, threat, blackmail, calumny, etc. received their "honorary" place, and the communist Jews weren't shy to use them when they felt that it was proper to do so. Regardless of their position, the communists wanted to have always and in everything their upper hand and priority, and if they didn't have it, they pushed hard to obtain it.

In those circumstances three tendencies stood out in the Jewish life: the Zionist members whose scope was the emigration to the Holy Land; the Jewish Party although with Zionist tendencies, was stating that the Jews had to live and organize their life between the boundaries of Romania; the members of the Jewish

Democratic Committee- all communists- were determined to use the Jewish masses and other Jewish organizations in order to enforce the directives of the Communist Party.

This period of time was characterized by a struggle in which the traditional Jewish leaders, beyond all critics, put together their weight in order to obtain from the government the restitution of the Jewish properties and the rights of citizenship to all those who had been hit by the anti-Semitic laws under Goga-Cuza government.

What should be underlined is the fact that the Jews in the years of brutal oppression knocked at the doors of the fascist leaders asking and many times obtaining the cancellation, or at least some softening of the dreadful decrees. After the war, the same Jewish leaders went to the communist leaders, many of them Jews, asking that the old fascist laws be deleted. Besides polite promises, the requests were shelved, and everything covered with oblivion. CDE in order to follow the policy of pleasing the communist leaders, released a new opportunistic slogan: "Justice, not Revenge." As a matter of fact, this was a subtle and demagogic action meant to destroy the moral fiber of the Jewish population in order to make it to give up the struggle for its rights. What was clear, was the fact that the guilty ones were brought just in small numbers and very late, to confront their prosecutors in a Court of Justice; "Revenge" was never applied, because first of all the moral concept of ethics and the Judaic Philosophy reject this kind of behavior.

The Federation leaders and the rank and file members understood the method used by the communists against the other political parties with which in a certain period they fully cooperated. When the communists thought that it was fitting their goals, they expelled those leaders from all coalitions and shortly had them sentenced to long and heavy years in prison. Keeping in mind those facts, the Jewish leaders understood the danger. What they didn't know then, was how deep and large will be the aria in which the communists will strike.

After the war, the Jewish organizations with meager means but with great enthusiasm and efforts started the work of putting in motion the institutions of public service. Some buildings belonging to the Jewish communities were restored, in which precincts started the activities of social assistance. Shortly things changed totally: when the communists started to "nationalize" the private properties, those with Jewish ownership were already "romanized" during the fascist era. The only difference now was that these ones became overnight "goods belonging to the working people." After long and tiresome intercessions, those much needed structures were returned to the Jewish communities, but couldn't stay under the Federation administration.

What CDE couldn't understand or wasn't able to, was the fact that those buildings had sheltered from generations the Jewish institutions. Together with the synagogues, they represented always centers where Jewish life flourished. In those years the great and well known hospital "Caritas" from Bucharest- used by

the Germans and Romanians during the war- was again under Jewish leadership. To remind always the life they lived and who are the real masters, a statue of Stalin was erected in the hospital lobby.

The Jewish schools began their activity with the curriculum in Romanian language. In those schools were re-organized again the well known "literary festivals" and other forms of cultural activity, where talented youth performed in orchestras and theater plays. After the war, 252 Jewish communities were rebuilt. The "Talmud Thora" schools were opened, the ritual bath, homes for the aged, orphanages were in full activity. Besides those institutions, 75 elementary schools, 24 high schools opened their doors to the students. Only in 1947 were trained in ORT schools 8000 youth, and 130 hachsharoths were ready to sent to Israel the first youngsters who finished their training. The Zionist Organizations were in full swing.

The Chief Rabbi felt in this period of time the need to go down to the scattered communities, to look closely to their problems. The same thing happened with those survivors of the Holocaust to bring to them a ray of hope. Between the years 1945-1947 Dr. Alexander Safran started a long journey to visit those communities and this had a great impact in their life. He was a messenger, and his words penetrated their minds and souls like a balm. At these meetings the population participated everywhere in big number, and the authorities listened, profoundly moved by the Rabbi's speeches. At a meeting in the city of Cluj he delivered a vibrant message: "...I came to Cluj to seek my brothers who are no

longer here. Where are they, those many Jews of this community? I cannot see them, I cannot find them. You, the non-Jews are responsible for my brothers, for their disappearance, for you had to guard them...In those terrible times while the Children of Israel were sent to a terrible death, you still dare to sing in your churches the Psalms of David, King of Israel, and bring on your lips the Hebrew word Amen, a word created by the Jews and uttered by them with piousness...The murders were prepared by the murderers in the open, with your knowledge and under cover of your guilty silence!"

From all over the country, the Rabbi received messages for invitation and his presence in the remotest cities had an important impact. The letters received from them, thanking for the visit, and underlining its importance, were a sign of national revival from people who for long had given up their nationalistic sentiments and a dignity which was broken by humiliation in the years of detention, forced labor and deep poverty. Due to some bright leaders, a great deal of work was done to unify all those actions and stop at last for a while their bickering. In those circumstances, in 1946 the First Zionist Congress after the war opened its door. It was a great event. Those who took part directly in the debates; those who listened from the audience; those who couldn't participate but were posted about what was going on there, carried on their hearts unforgettable memories, together with the unspeakable pain felt for those who couldn't be there: the people killed in the Holocaust by those who nowadays deny the truth and turn their back to reality.

In his Message at the opening of the Congress, Chief Rabbi Dr. Alexander Safran delivered an inspiring speech about which Chaim Cohen wrote in the newspaper "Yechud": "Besides the members of the Congress, the numerous delegates and the diplomatic representatives...felt that in front of them was not only a leading speaker, but also a great prophetic personality." This unity was able to put in motion the hidden and powerful forces ready to act in order to fulfill the Zionist's dream and ideal...But CDE's "hand" was shortly felt! Beginning With the so called "dissident groups" which started their ominous activity, trying, and many times succeeding, to destroy from inside the cohesion and the Federation organizational forces. At the beginning, the blows were directed toward Filderman, and the names put in circulation, were meant to slender the image of a distinguished Jewish leader. But people knew better.

What should be kept in mind is the fact that CDE worked always with such a faithfulness, that when the communists' leadership exercised retaliation against political foes, CDE in a smaller "scale" did the same thing to the Jewish leaders who didn't agree with their policy. In the galaxy of all kind of Jewish organizations set up under the communists' watchful eye and guidance, the Congress of the "Union of Romanian Jews" of communist pattern took place. The main goal was to destroy the presence of the "old" Federation in the Jewish life. Under CDE pressures newspapers like: "The Israelite Courier" (Curierul Israelit); "The Redemption" (Mantuirea); "Our Renaissance" (Renasterea Noastra) and others, were abolished in the same way as

the fascists did it before. The newspaper "Unirea" (Unity) the mouthpiece of CDE never succeeded to unify the masses; and the same end was met by the published paper "Viata Noua" (New Life) which wasn't able to reflect the daily life of the Jewish population. The rabbis were compelled to deliver sermons meant to brand the "imperialistic" attitude of the Anglo-Americans, the war mongers, etc. All kind of speakers took the floor, trying to demonstrate in front of the silent and distrustful audiences the advantages of fighting together in the ranks of the Communist Party.

In the fall of 1947 at the CDE Congress, its leaders asked loudly that the Jewish parties and organizations of all kind be abolished, charging their leaders of destroying the democratic spirit and CDE's political platform. It was crystal clear that the Communist Party considered that CDE was good enough and able to apply their line in the Jewish masses. Regarding this attitude, the Holocaust in general, and especially what happened in Romania, continued to be covered by silence. These facts started to be said in the open, thanks to the Jewish delegation during the Peace Conference in Paris. It seems that the most important mission of the Romanian Delegation was to show the whole matter in a false light: "...The main task of the Romanian state delegates at the Paris Conference was to conceal to the foreign governments the real situation of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust. The Romanian envoys to the French capital were busy convincing the democratic nations that the situation of the Jews in Romania had not been so terrible during the war. The memorandum that the

Romanian delegates distributed at the Conference tried to gloss over the truth, decreasing to neglectable figures the huge number of Jewish victims, diminishing the responsibility of the Romanian government for the slaughter of Jews, so horrible in its cruelty and number, which led to the total annihilation of entire Jewish communities in Bessarabia and Bukovina. They presented an embellished picture of the economic and social condition that had existed, stating for example, that the forced labor of the Jews had been "manageable" consisti ng only of "public utility works."

In this period of time the economical and financial situation of Romania was worsening. The outcome of long years of war, the alliance with the nazi Germany and later with the Western powers left bone dry the country's warehouses, factories, mines, oil wells etc. Later, the fulfillment to the letter of the armistice with the Soviets brought the whole economy in the verge of bankruptcy. The consequences of this situation was that the population impoverished, and the Jews felt this, directly, in a special way. The so called "monetary reform" (1947) meant to stop a skyrocketing inflation, brought a new blow to the small shop owners, craftsmen of all kinds, and the young intellectuals. Regardless of how much money they possessed, they had the "right" to exchange only a small amount of old Lei, receiving in exchange 150 Lei. Anybody owning foreign currency was compelled under heavy penalties to exchange it at a low rate. The new terminology "economic saboteurs" was the word of the day, and everybody was sure that this meant years of prison. In the mean time, a catastrophic drought struck Moldavia for two years in a row, and

people starved literally of hunger. The typhus exantematic started its deadly "harvest": Moldavia was on its brink!

The news regarding the catastrophic drought which had stricken Moldavia was echoed in the United States, where Dr. Safran was paying a visit to resume the relations with the Jewish organizations in order to ask help for the Jewish community. The drought and the famine determinated Chief Rabbi to ask those organizations to start some intercession with the American government. In this period, the Romanian envoy to the United States was Professor Mihai Ralea, well known for his democratic struggle and acquaintance with Dr. Safran. The trip in the United States was fruitful and the contributions beyond all expectations. This great success raised the risk to stir up back in the country sentiments of envy and could be a good opportunity to ignite the flames of old hatred. This very objective problem was presented by Dr. Safran to the Jewish leaders, who promised to do everything in their power to help alleviate those painful sufferings of the Romanian people. At the White House this claim was first met with a shrug. Romania was still seen as an ally of the nazi Germany, although after the Armistice, the Romanians fought fiercely along with the Russians losing 170,000 dead in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The memories of the horrors during the Holocaust didn't fade away. Later on, some good news came to surface. Rabbi Safran told: "...On February 16, 1947 I found myself in front of Times Square, the brightly lit center of Manhattan. I was accompanied by several Jewish personalities who were seeing me to my hotel after a meeting. Suddenly, they stopped in amazement and

pointed to the news flashed in neon above the Time building. It reported that President Truman had granted exceptional aid to Romania, because of the drought conditions there...The leaders congratulated one another and told me I could now be more relaxed about the immediate situation of the Romanian Jews."

The next morning, when the aid made news all over the papers and radio stations, the Ambassador Mihai Ralea invited Rabbi Dr. Safran in Washington, where he organized a great reception in his honor. Before embarking for home, Dr. Safran received from Mihai Ralea an official letter expressing Romania's gratitude for all he had obtained for his country. In his letter, Ralea wrote: "Dr. Safran fulfilled his mission with flying colors, and brought great services to the Romanian cause." Regarding this difficult period of time, the great musician, violinist, composer, George Enesco in his capacity, and being elected deputy in the Parliament representing the Dorohoi county, was delegate by the Romanian government to leave for the United States with the mission to collect money in order to help the population from starvation. Dr. Safran remembered: "In 1947 he (Enesco) gave several concerts in America, and he sent his earnings to the starvings of his dear Moldavia." Mihai Ralea said that Enesco had sent 30,000 dollars to Romania to buy corn. However, Enesco and his wife never returned to communist Romania.

The return in Bucharest of the Chief Rabbi and his wife was a major event in the political life. Concerned by the catastrophic economical situation, top ranking leaders of the Communist Party left for Moscow, asking Stalin for help. The whole Romanian media

was in a state of delirium after their return, praising the "Brotherly" help received. The aid sent by the United States was loaded with medicine, especially against the typhus, huge quantities of all kind of food and seeds for the next crop. In the same time, on the railroads could be seen trains with huge billboards on which everybody could read about the loaded cargo: food sent as aid by the Russians. As a matter of fact nobody saw those trains stopping somewhere and discharging their precious load. The "Big Brother" hungry himself after a disastrous crop, instead of wheat, or seeds for corn, etc. sent seeds to plant the so-called "sorgho vulgare" used for making brooms. Those seeds were ground and people had to eat them, but they never forgot!

In those difficult circumstances, low level bickering took place between the Jewish organizations, trying to poison the soul and conscience of the people deeply preoccupied with the harshness of daily life. When the clothes for children arrived in Bucharest, and the distribution to the needy started, CDE didn't lose the momentum to make its voice heard. A violent campaign started saying that the children were dressed in rugs. In a special meeting the Council of the Jewish Community from Bucharest thanked officially to Rabbi Safran for the matzoth brought as a present from Manischewitz Enterprises to the Jewish population.

The Jewish organizations connected with the Communist Party, through their representatives, displayed publicly these feelings, as the government looked totally indifferent to the American help. In the middle of this feverish activity two events showed to the Jewish leaders the magnitude and danger of the threat under which

they have to live: during a meeting between Dr. Safran and Emil Bodnaras, the powerful communist leader, the latter told the Rabbi that shortly a great purge would take place against the "historical" parties, which Bodnaras quoted this time as "fascists." Dr. Safran understood that this top ranking communist didn't just wanted to gossip about those "news." It was clear that this information regarding future events didn't concern him directly at that time, but the Rabbi was aware that there were some personal hints for him too. On June 27, 1947 Iuliu Maniu, the well known leader of the National Peasant Party was arrested together with other leaders, and was to be brought shortly to trial. After the "Palace Coup" followed by Antonescu's arrest and the replacement of the fascist rulers, two coalition governments were formed with Russian approval. Each time the government was reshuffled, the communists seized additional powerful positions. In the meantime, the Northern part of Transylvania was the topic for long and passionate debates. Although the Romanian Army fought for the liberation of Transylvania together with the Soviet Army, the retrocession of this territory didn't take place! The Russians demanded strongly that in exchange for this very important act in the life of Romania, the government should consist only of communists. This was accomplished on March 6th, 1945.

At the Peace Conference in Paris, Dr. Safran, in his capacity, was invited to participate. There, he understood clearly the precarious situation of Romania at this International forum. The Romanian participation in the last part of the war as allied of the Western forces wasn't considered substantial enough to be

accepted by the Allies, and the country was still viewed as an ally of Nazi Germany. The Jewish delegation, putting aside everything that happened within this community during the war, expressed clearly their desire to support Romania in fulfilling its rights.

The leaders of the historical parties still free, understood the whole tragedy: when the Groza government was installed, Northern Transylvania was united with the Mother Country, and in the meantime the gates of the prisons were widely open.

This complexity of the facts will shortly show their consequences and especially their repercussions. It was clear for everybody that after the arrest of the leaders of the historical parties, the Jewish leaders would follow. Having this in mind, CDE tried to find an opportunity to unleash a chain reaction. It started with the discharge from their duties of all the community leaders in the country. Against the leaders, as well as the rank and file members of the Federation, started a campaign of slender, whose main target was Filderman. In a meeting with Dr. Safran, the latter said that somebody told him that shortly he will be arrested and accused of being a spy for the West. In September 1947, Dr. W. Filderman resigned from his position as leader of the Federation, and the CDE said emphatically: "The Jewish Democratic Committee has successfully got rid of the old leadership of the Federation of Communities headed by Dr. Filderman, a leadership that had been an obstacle in the development of all Jewish institutions."

After a few days Filderman confided to Dr. Safran that one of his connections had warned him that he will be arrested, but he didn't know the contents of the impeachment. He told the Rabbi that he will be removed from his position and brought too in front of a Court of Justice. One night, with the help of a few close friends, Filderman succeeded to cross the border. This was the moment when the public campaign of slender against the Chief Rabbi started. To feel the pressures more directly, a Russian major paid a visit to Rabbi Safran. His name was Levi. After a dramatic exchange, he asked the Rabbi to sign for him an affidavit requesting the death penalty for Iuliu Maniu. Rabbi Safran told the Soviet officer: "I should tell you that I talk to you knowing that you are a Jew. I cannot sign such a document because it could unleash a pogrom against the Jewish population. You know very well that here in Romania, Maniu is considered by the Romanian people as a great patriot. When the Romanians will find out that the Chief Rabbi of Romanian Jewry signed such a document against Maniu, they will want to revenge this. You know that the Romanians have already been anti-Semitic and they could avenge themselves bitterly against the Jews. The major got angry and started playing with his gun: "Now I understand why you don't want to sign; that's because you cooperated with Maniu and other fascists during the war and you won't do anything against them today"...and the major said at the end: "...Don't you realize where you and your family could end up, if you don't obey me?" The major left in anger.

Sandu Lieblich installed with bells on by the CDE as President of the Federation, surrounded by his aids or coming by

himself, used to pay unattended and unexpected visits to the home of Rabbi Safran. Each time he didn't spare his threats, requesting always the Chief Rabbi for something. For example, he asked him once to sign an appeal against all non-communists and Zionists. Each time Dr. Safran rejected those demands, the enraged "President" never forgot to remind the Rabbi that: "...if there is no improvement in our relationship (the communist leadership) we would have to replace you with someone sharing their point of view and was ready to do what the Federation asked him to." A difficult moment came when Lieblich resolutely asked the Chief Rabbi to sign a document asking the government to take over all the educational, cultural, and social Jewish institutions, about which Lieblich said: "living in a democratic state we do not have any need to own or administrate those kind of buildings or institutions." In those circumstances it appeared clearly that not just the organizational system of the Jewish Communities will be destroyed, but those "New Jewish Fighters" were determined to destroy the core of the Jewish soul, the educational system. It was difficult to admit, but during the fascist period, Nandor Gingold, former president of the Jewish Centrale, a baptized Jew, had agreed that the Jewish children were to be educated in the Jewish schools and Jewish tradition; Dr Sandu Lieblich, born in an old and well known Jewish family form Iasi, was aiming total annihilation. During the war the fascist government confiscated the Jewish social properties applying their anti-Semitic laws: after the war the communists and their public servants, offered these institutions to the State, under the wide spread banner of democracy and equality.

The Chief Rabbi declined the "honor" to be part of this scam.

On December 22, 1947, Dr. Lieblich paid a last visit to Dr. Safran. It was nothing unusual. The Chief Rabbi was ready to listen to new demands but this time Dr. Lieblich had something else in his sleeve: matter of fact, he told to the astonished Rabbi that it was decided that he, and his family had to leave the country in just two hours! His daughter was at school, his wife somewhere in town, and his two-year old son was sleeping. At two o'clock, the whole family was gathered on the platform of the railroad station. It was obvious that the government wanted to precipitate a hasty departure in order to avoid disorders among the Jewish population which was known as closely attached to Dr. Safran.

The saga of the journey from Bucharest to Geneva-Switzerland will remain forever a sad reality in which some Jews, playing at the tune of the communists (and anti-Semites) did the dirty work, expelling their Rabbi and his family, just because he dared to stand up and dignified on his position as a fighter which was his for a lifetime. In Paris on January 1, 1948 Dr. Safran learned from the newspaper "France Soir": "King Michael of Romania has abdicated (December 30, 1947)...He had to choose between his honor and his crown...King Mihai made his choice...Everything had been fixed and arranged by Ana Pauker and Emil Bodnaras, the two personalities governing Romania...They had nevertheless said that if the King would act according to their will, they could apply a less severe sentence to Maniu, who was then on trial."

No longer after Rabbi Safran arrived in Geneva, he learned that Dr. Sandu Lieblich had been arrested. He was not anymore necessary to the communist rulers. Between the population from Moldavia and Bucharest, after the advance of the Russian troops during the Iasi offensive, all contacts were broken. In a few days the Soviet troops entered Bucharest. The railroads heading toward Moldavia were destroyed, bridges blown up, highways out of work after heavy bombardments. The government needed to know what happened beyond these lines, aware that the population was lacking any administration, and had only limited quantities of food. First of all were interested in what happened with their political followers. Later, in the fall of 1944 when heavy fights took place in Transylvania, a government commission took the road toward Moldavia. This first contact with this province was very important, and the surprise about what was found there, overwhelming. In this commission were: Emil Bodnaras; for the communist party, Hudici, Niculescu-Ruzești and other representatives from the coalition government.

The cities received the delegation with dignity and high sense of responsibility. A whole administration was in place: prefects, mayors, police chiefs, judges, etc. The members of the delegation thought they'll have to stay there in order to hire people to fill up positions, but everybody was in place and the administrative machinery worked in full capacity. Being aware of the situation, the delegation confirmed the state of facts. Later, those returned from evacuation started some bickering on a low voice, and soon protested loudly: "The Jews took our jobs!" From

whom did they obtain them? They were abandoned! Those in charge left everything behind, not just obeying the orders, but trying to hide in the other side of the country, carrying on their shoulders their deeds in Bessarabia, Bukovina, or Transnistria. The cities had to stay alive. Before entering in the offices, the same population worked hard to clean the cities of dead people lying all over, after the street battles. It was in the middle of the summer and the epidemics were a danger for everyone.

Nobody took those positions at random. They worked hard and later were installed by the governmental delegation. Besides the truth and reality, the voices kept to be heard louder and louder. The old echoes of hatred started to resound and the hope that everything will be again as it was in the past, put the imagination on fire. People thought that they were participating in a "revolution," but soon realized that nothing was really revolutionary. The waters were muddy again by so many interfering profiteers of all kind. Everybody considered themselves as the best, the most sincere, and entitled to be followed.

The later return of the Jews from their places of detention or deportation wasn't wanted or expected. It wasn't wanted because everybody knew that they'll claim back the stolen properties. They weren't expected, because from the beginning everyone was sure that the deportees would be killed to the last one. The return of the Jews was considered a defeat and a clear sign of incapacity of an administration perfectly trained to kill, and which wasn't able to fulfil its assignment. All remembered that when those Jews were sent away, everybody was hoping that nobody will see them for

ever. They were just "dirty kikes". Returning from their "Valley of Death," they became suddenly "My dear Mister Jew!" Everybody looked for the friendship of a Jew.

Confronting the harshness of this reality, the Jews realized that "liberation" doesn't mean "freedom," and the word didn't have even the value of the paper on which was printed. They were liberated, but with no place to go; were free, but not equals. After a certain period of time, those installed in comfortable armchairs in charge with the happiness of people, did not want to find out about the human conditions in which those survivors lived, but about their numbers; how many of them confronted death, and were still alive? The attempt to handle the figures in order to distort the reality was without any value, and the same goes for the proofs used to state the fact that there never was a Holocaust in Romania. The "figures" collected from doubtful sources and spread in a media with old prejudices, were meant to present the crime as an ordinary fact, the reality being hidden under a glossy coat of lies. Beyond all these, the chilling fact was that these crimes were real. Nobody, nowhere had written a line expressing regret; nobody tried to find an explanation regarding the reasons.

The debate is not about the truth, not just about the numbers of victims. Regardless of the fact that so many people perished, nobody was heard showing any regrets about what happened. The pious ones, asked: "cui prodest?" (who needs it?) after so many years, to open again the debate on the number of those killed and those who did these infamous crimes? During the war, the fascist

leadership ordered a thoroughly drawn-up census regarding the Jews still alive within the Romanian's borders. On April 20, 1942 this census known as the: "Census of the population of Jewish blood" was completed. A question could be asked: why in the middle of the war, after so many killings, the government wanted to know the exact figure of how many Jews were still alive? The answer is simple: nobody gave a damn about how many Jews were killed, but how many were still alive, was extremely important. The Jews were to be sold! Like any merchandise, the numbers of this diabolical "inventory" were on the front burner. Alive, they meant money, a lot of money. They counted thoroughly the Jews from Romania, from the liberated provinces (after the deportation), those in the camps. At the end of this meticulous work, the figures of this census were clear and undoubtable: in Romania, comprising the Old Kingdom, Banat, South Transylvania, Northern Dobrudja, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Dorohoi, and Herta, on April 20, 1942 there were 292,149 Jews from 756,930 living in the same territories according to the census of 1930. The last figure did not include 148,173 Jews from Northern Transylvania deported by the Hungarians and Germans to Auschwitz. From the deportation to all these places, 80,146 Jews returned. It was clear that in Romania, at the end of 1945, lived around 372,295 survivors of the Holocaust. The difference between 756,930 (1930 census) and those alive in 1945 shows that 384,635 Jews were missing, respectively killed in the Holocaust by Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans. To this figure should be added about 150,000 Ukrainian Jews and those from Odessa killed by the Romanian gendarmery, Ukrainian militia, Germans

(Folks deutsche) all of them acting under Romanian command. In those numbers are not accounted the Jews sent by Romanians across the River Bug to the Germans, employed in big road constructions, where they were killed on the spot, or when they became exhausted and worn up. The natural increase (around 6811) of the Jewish population in the decade 1930-1940 in the territory of Greater Romania, is not included in these figures.

In this tireless campaign in a much disputed debate relating the Holocaust in Romania, and the obsession which some became adroit by marking the numbers for a foul play, many acquired handy means of eluding the reality. Some deny that there even was a Holocaust in Romania; others yielded that "something" happened which could be accepted as such, but only within certain limits.

It is important to mention a very little known chapter from the Jewish emigration saga: the emigration to Russia. As a matter of fact, two aspects of the same tragedy. After September 1940 when the Legionaries under Antonescu's leadership took the power, the situation of the Jews became well known by its hardships. During the summer, the Russians occupied the two provinces, and the city of Herta. In this situation there was only one way to escape the legionaries: crossing the River Prut in Bessarabia or in the North in Bukovina. Two centers for transfer of the population were at work: one at Reni in the South of Moldavia, one in the North, at Burdujeni. There were people caught by the events in the Old Kingdom, or in the ceded territories who wanted to go back to their homes, their families. Nobody could imagine, nobody knew the anti-Semitism which awaited them crossing the border at

the above mentioned check points. Other people tried to cross the river at other points, using smugglers as guides, or settlers from the region, who knew hidden places and routes. A whole industry of forged documents was in place, and the Jews gathered by thousands at the crossing points heading toward the "land of liberty." When the deadline for crossing the borders expired, a large number of people were caught in the middle: the Russians did not allow them to go ahead; the Romanians forbade them to go back to their towns. During the freezing nights of January 1942, Romanian soldiers took groups of 50-60 people and sent them across the border. They had to walk through mined fields, and the ratio of death was overwhelming. Later, thanks to Dr. Filderman, those Jews were allowed to be interned in the camp of Tg.Jiu. In this way, a page of their odyssey was turned over!

The second fold of the tragedy of "emigrating" toward Russia happened in the year 1946. The Jews who managed to survive Transnistria succeeded to enter in Romania, dreaming to emigrate to Israel or elsewhere. Suddenly, one night, with the collaboration of the Romanian police and Soviet security forces sent especially for this mission, they were escorted to the stations and packed in railway cars. This time there were not cattle cars, and they were sent back to Bukovina and Bessarabia...or elsewhere! This time they were not <u>deported</u> to Russia, just <u>returned</u> there! Nobody heard anymore about those people, there were more than 50,000 of them surviving the Holocaust. How many survived the return to the Fatherland, the anti-Zionist persecutions, the campaign against "cosmopolitism"

and other "isms" who strangled the Jewish Life in the Soviet Union after the war, nobody knows. And nobody cares!

This was the last chapter of the Transnistrian tragedy. Now, those hair splitting "specialists" are here to tell us about: "Deportation to Transnistria, the Proportions of the Massacres and the Credibility of numbers."

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The Jewish emigration from Romania, an exodus unfolded over a long period of time and with proportions little known by people in other countries, was an action unique in its harshness. The necessity of totally uprooting their presence from the land, brought up the decision. The disappearance from Romanian territory of those who took this road, is a hot topic for those who will research the past of this population, trying to understand the drama lived by isolate individuals or whole communities.

In this situation the emigration could not be connected with the uprising of a group of people looking for a better place under the sun. The idea of uprooting could be fulfilled only as long as, in their movement, the emigrants didn't leave behind testimonies of their ancient existence on those places.

When the dust settled down on the muddy roads behind the columns of those "pedestrian travelers" in their way toward the borders; when people stopped talking and started huggling on the railroad platforms; when walking on the tarmac at the international airports, the dumbfound emigrant stopped for an

instant, trying to understand what happened to him, realizing that this was a moment when he didn't belong anymore to the land of departure, and still not completely detached from what was left behind: books and tombstones.

The similitude could be accepted as a paradox, but this is a reality deeply carved in the life of each emigrant. A tomb darkened by vicissitudes of time, carrying on fadded, old chiseled inscriptions, with names and dates long vanished away; all of them became indisputable documents. A peculiar troubadour living in Moldavia in the second part of the 19th century, a human being with a great sensibility and an explosive temper, found in the researches made on the tombs in old forgotten cemeteries, centennial testimonies of Jewish existence on those places. Joseph (Iosif) Psantir nicknamed the "Fiddler" was making a living by playing the voilin in a popular band. In a certain circumstance, somebody from the audience said to him that he was a stranger and didn't belong to the land. Deeply offended, the poor fiddler challenged this man teling him that he could find his ancestors in the Botosani cemetary buried there hundreds of years ago. This small occurrence changed his life. Psantir gave up his profession, started to travel from city to city, spending his whole time researching old tombs, carefully making epigraphic research regarding the continuity of the Jewish life on the land. Later on, his works were printed and he became one of the most interesting Jewish historians in Romania. He died poor, forgotten, but his work is there.

In many Jewish cemeteries from Romania- as elsewhere- Jewish tombs were maimed, stained with paint, overturned. Without Jews at hand, they were molested. Protected by the silence of the cemeteries, the hooligans of today found the right place to do what they liked to do for such a long time: beat the Jews! They "killed" this time just tombs, but they didn't know that those stones had their soul too. The perpetrators, no doubt, must be strong and young, able to turnover heavy stones, and to squash them with the sledgehammers.

Those tombs belong to the Jews who rest there; to those who are still living and honor their memory; to those who will come after them. When talking about those values and sentiments we should not forget them. Tombstones with pictures of them representing great personalities in the Jewish life; in large sectors of the cemeteries are resting Jewish heroes who paid with their life the foundation of the Greater Romania; Those images and others should not be left behind and forgotten. We should find them in great frames or in small albums all over the world, where Jews from Romania are living; in university halls, libraries, museums, etc. They are not just memorials, but living history. Those tombstones must emigrate too, not left behind like worn-up socks. Leaving, the Jews took with them first of all their families; after then their sacred tombs; after then the books! Yes, the books written by scholars, authors, poets, etc. during long nights of creation, and long days of research. They are part of the Romanian culture, but as long as the Romanians denied the Jewish contribution to their culture, those books remain Jewish by

their inner soul. And old newspapers with yellowish pages, written with love and passion by journalists who raised their voices defending the Jews. These writings reflect the reality.

There was a time in Romania when following the Nazi rule, legionaries gathered books written by Jewish authors or gentile democrats and burned them in the squares of Bucharest and all over the country. On the walls and fences, large posters with bold letters carried the pennames of the Jewish writers, artists, etc. and besides, their Jewish name. People keep forgetting, and said that everything is gone. Now it is not always the same ploy, but the "actors" are playing to the same old tune, with a new subtle context: "you'll write; I'll sign!" Some "specialists" spread their benevolence to everybody who accepted the deal. Many playing safely, liked to have on their dustcover a prestigious gentile name, especially when the Jewish author asked for a passport.

Take the books with you! If your children's children will not know to read them anymore, at least they will know that they belong to people who were compelled to emigrate, in order to be accepted as human beings.

The cycle was closed: people emigrated; the tombstones emigrated, books and publications did the same. Then the Torah emigrated too! In the middle of the sixties, the government agreed to approve the sending of 2000 Torahs in Israel. It was a "present" said the communists and their public servants. But people tried to understand the meaning: the Torah were theirs, belonging to their communities, to their synagogues. How someone could make a present of something that doesn't belong to him?

Anyway, it was the greatest "emigration" of Torahs from all over the world, an event unknown elsewhere! But each Torah had its own "life," its own "history." And these could not be separated from the inner core of Jewish tradition. In the old time, anonymous scribes wrote letter by letter, word by word and the Holy Scriptures became part of the fresh cut parchment: the wisdom and philosophy of a people. Those Torahs dressed in velvet attire with golden and silvery embroidery were raised in holidays or in the days of "Torah Reading" in front of the humble and rich alike, who bent in front of their splendor. In the nights of Simhat Torah, in the synagogues lit by flickering candles or beaming chandeliers, the Jews danced with the Torahs, around the Torahs, overwhelmed by joy.

Leaving toward their deportation and death places, the Jews from Radauti (just one example) collected from all 23 synagogues the Torahs, and left them in the custody of a certain "good" Romanian, Kuczinsky. But the regiments in their triumphal march made drums from the parchments, and the officers linings for their high boots; they were waterproof! In the village of Turcoaia from Macin county, the fishermen left for their work on the Danube having their feet wrapped with Torahs. Each time I see fish in my plate, I remember those fishermen and the Torah around their feet.

Through the broken panes of the synagogues burned, pillaged, and destroyed there was just loneliness. The community people died in the camps; the survivors emigrated at the first opportunity. The Torahs stood silenced and sad, waiting for their days of glory. At last, they emigrated too! And the Book of Books are

shining again, pointing toward the future: "Where is Torah, there is Hohma!" Right, as it was written!

Living under a permanent pressure, always concerned by the accusations thrown in their faces, the Jews tried always to prove their attachment to the country and devotion for the Fatherland. Besides the direct contacts with the masters of the land which always ended up with "presents" of different values, the Jews detaining certain position in the life of the society tried to be known and subsequently appreciated not just by their deeds, but by their contribution to the economical, cultural and financial development of the country.

The obvious necessity of emigration from Romania as a definitive uprooting from the land, became an unique solution to put an end once and for all to an existence at the brink of society. To look through old books and manuscripts, especially into those regarding Jewish history and the life of personalities who played a certain part in the land between the Danube River and the Carpathian Mountains, could be an interesting chronicle of this people in a time when it looked like everybody was against the Jews. They could be found in the scientific, technical, literary, and musical fields, bringing great improvements on an underdeveloped country and upon people much behind the conditions prevailing in other countries of Europe. Entrepreneur Emanoil Rosenthal was well known for his construction of highways, railroads, and especially military barracks and public buildings, still an attraction today due to their architectural beauty. Engineer Solomon Marcu was renown for the installation of

electricity in Bucharest, construction of large boulevards in the Capital, public gardens and the Royal Palace of Cotroceni. The city of Iasi was illuminated by electricity thanks to engineer Marcu's activity.

The bankers Abraham Halfon and Solomon Halfon gave a great importance to the financial development of the country, and the last bestowed to Romanian Academy an amount of 50,000 lei in gold to help talented youths to complete their education abroad. It should be mentioned that not a single Jewish student took profit of this opportunity. Solomon Halfon helped with big amounts of money the construction of the beautiful structure "Romanian Athenée" which sheltered over the years great conductors and renown musicians, being in the same time the hot bed where the great anti-Semitic meetings were organized as well.

Jews could be found in all ways of life, and their presence was felt handsomely. It is hard to mention them all, but besides their activity in the country, they had remarkable presence abroad too. Tristan Tzara and his followers founded the Dada literary movement known as "Dadaysm," which played an important role in the cultural life of France and elsewhere. Paul Celan, Benjamin Fondane, Pascin and many others remain forever in the National Pantheon of France. Eduard de Max, member of the famous "Comédie Française" was well known for his professionalism and talent, becoming over the years a prestigious artistic personality in Paris. Lia Vermont Ventura was renown in Paris and in Bucharest alike for her talent. Her daughter Maria Ventura became a leading personality at the "Comédie Française." Her brother, the artist

painter Nicolas Vermont is well known for his landscapes in the Romanian National Gallery, and the interiors paintings of the cathedral of Cernavoda, the churches of Rucar and Fundeni-Ilfov, becoming a master of Romanian-Orthodox style.

The period of time after World War I, was extremely difficult for the whole economy of Romania and from the financial point of view, the country was on the brink of bankruptcy. The fascist political agitations were at their peak. The debates became hot in Parliament regarding the bestowing citizenship to the Jews according to the stipulations of the Peace Treaty of Versailles and The Minority Treaty of Saint Germain, both signed by the Romanian delegations. The streets and squares became the places of political stir, followed always by a "promenade" in the Jewish districts playing the same play: pillaging, robbing, and putting on torch synagogues and Jewish homes.

On May 14, 1923 an event apparently unrelated shook the whole country by its unprecedented proportions. The well known banker Jacques M. Elias passed away. Everybody knew him as a tight fisted human being. When his will was opened, the country held its breath: he left his whole fortune evaluated to more than a billion lei to the Romanian Academy in order to: "contribute to the enlightenment of the people." Jacques Elias together with his brothers and father founded "The General Bank of Romania" which contributed with its investments to the development of the oil wells, sugar and timber industry, etc. Nobody was able to appreciate at the moment of his death the whole range of properties. Just a few of them: large properties of first class

farm land; buildings for rent; in Vienna, nine magnificent palaces; on the Dalmatian coast of Adriatic Sea, he owned two mines of mercury; and in the most important financial establishments in Europe, he nested huge amounts of money. He left legacies of important amounts of money to the Rabbi of Jerusalem, to the Christian churches, and to other congregations from Romania.

The whole media wrote about this event and even the anti-Semitic ones could not overlook it: "...An unique act of philanthropy which was done to us in the past only by the greatest landowners (boieri) who bestowed on our nation the same bequets," wrote Nicolae Iorga in his newspaper "Neamul Romanesc." Dr. Nicolae Lupu, the well known democratic leader wrote in the paper "Aurora": "A generous gesture like this never happened until now in our country, it was done by the Jewish banker (Jacques Elias) and it happened in the middle of today's unrest. It is a harsh reprimand to all those anti-Semitic agitators."

People with large hearts and large means showed for long their feelings toward Romania. On May 10, 1881 (the Independence Day of Romania) the bankers, Daniel from Iasi made a donation of 15,000 golden ducats; Jacob Neuschatz, also from Iasi, bestowed on the same institution "The Romanian Academy" 20,000 golden coins. The hospital built in Bucharest from the legacy left by Jacques Elias- the most modern at the time- was closed to the "ordinary" people under the communists. Only the high ranking officials could enjoy the right to take care of their health in such an institution. And the name of the "capitalist" Elias was erased

from the hospital frontispiece, being replaced by just a mere number. But the communists didn't stop there! The name Elias was erased everywhere, and nobody had to remember him. The properties were "nationalized," the obligations toward the Jewish institutions, clearly left in the will, were repealed.

Many people considered that Elias didn't do enough for the Jewish community. But his donations and the huge amounts of money bestowed on so many institutions were done for the Jews. Jacques Elias and other donors wanted to change the perception of the anti-Semites toward the Jews. But they didn't understand that the money could not change their feelings. It was a clear demonstration that the Jews, when they make money, seldom transfer it abroad. They invested mostly in land and in cultural institutions, dreaming in this way to help their fellow Jews to live their lives as human beings.

The "fathers" of the city of Bucharest did something to preserve the memory of this outstanding human being: a street is bearing the name of Jacques Elias. About this, a little bit of light should be spread around. For those of today, and for those of tomorrow, the cynical attitude was overwhelming! If the passer by will try to follow his curiosity, all he has to do is to take a look at the street at which entrance an old rusted sign says "Jacques Elias Street." A few words will try to describe the environment, because few people have the opportunity to visit the place. This will help the reader to understand easily the moral conditions in which the Jews lived and were appreciated in Romania.

At the beginning of the Saint Vineri Street which opens from the Saint George Square, behind the supermarket "Alimentara" well known for ages under the former owner's name: Dinischiotu, there is a narrow lane street always full of heaths. The dilapidated buildings are unhabitable. The sidewalks with potholes, covered with cans of trash thrown away from the front stores. Nobody could walk through the middle of the street paved with big cobblestones: everybody risks to break a hip...A street carrying a name, but where nobody is sending letters because nobody is living there; a street of phantoms in a Bucharest dead for long. That is the street with which the "fathers" of Bucharest honored the memory of Jacques Elias, the Jew who left to the Romanian people the amount of one billion lei in a time when the Jewish students were beaten on the streets, thrown away from courses at the University which received over the years huge amounts of money from Jewish donors.

In front of this street, in the days of Sabbath or Holidays, used to walk for decades the Chief Rabbi of Romania Dr. Moses Rosen heading toward the Coral Temple. He never asked the slightest change in keeping Bucharest clean and beautiful; how such a blasphemy could happen? He kept the same silence when in the years (1962-1966) were published in Bucharest four volumes of "The Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary" by the "Political Publishing House" and under the supervision of the Romanian Academy. There wasn't even a single line written, remembering who was Jacques Elias.

Words and memories could not emigrate. Only the scars! Those scars are remembered in all the places where Jews from Romania

settled: the uprooted roots started blooming again, and their scent of hope is felt deep in their souls.

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The commemoration in 1991 of 50 years from the Holocaust in Romania- as much as it was done- could have been an opportunity to have a thorough soul search, a sincere and objective debate regarding the reality and the irrefutable truth. In the columns of the press or meetings, radio and television could be heard and seen people shooting in protest, trying to cover up the frail voice of reason. What could have been a moment of approach and unity, was again lost in the waterfalls of hatred. All of these, even trying hard, could not find reasonable explanations about what happened, and why again and again the policy of denial had succeeded nowadays, as always. To agree with those old-cooked "arguments," waved like banners by Romanian personalities living in the country or those living abroad, was difficult. Mostly using fake figures, they were trying to diminish the responsibilities of the perpetrators, and those who were working hard to sweep the awful truth under the rug.

In this light could be seen another facet of the Holocaust and its aftermath in Romania; its consequences in the life of the Jewish people which- at last- looked toward emigration as a relief. The arrests of Zionists, the references regarding the prominent personalities of the movement, followed soon by the rank and file members, started to be counted in great numbers. As was said, the distinction between the old political parties and the Zionists ones was that the trials organized for the first ones

were great public relation shows, where the whole media, foreign correspondents and "special envoys" were seated in the front rows. Even on the streets surrounding the building which housed the trials, people were brought from all stratum of society. The arrested Zionists were held for years in confinement, investigations and many later sentenced with life terms. But about their trials, everybody kept silence. In the meantime, in Israel, a Committee was constituted to protest to the Romanian government against the arrest of the Zionists and especially the regimen of terror and destruction suffered by them. In Tel Aviv, 52 persons declared a hunger strike, and in Knesseth deputies took the floor asking the government to take action. Well aware of this whole scenario, with its illegal and overbearing orders released by the Romanian government this was not a big surprise for the Zionists, even for those caught in this net of intrigues and conspiracies. They went on during other harsh situations, like the ones when they fought to save the life of those still in the dark. At the beginning of June 1950, Jean Cohen was informed by two well known personalities in the Communist Party, that an order has been released to arrest the Zionist leaders. He informed Misu Benvenisti, and the news spread around soon. What appears strange, even after so many years, is the fact that although the government move was well known, and even in a certain sense expected, nobody paid special attention, at least to try to hide. Shortly, in the late hours of the night they were arrested. One was missing. As a matter of fact, two: Jean Cohen and his wife!

The night before the hunting started, Jean Cohen, family and friends were on the platform at the Bucharest railroad station, ready for a trip to the slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. Someone brought the news. Suddenly, a decision had to be taken: his wife and children will return home, and Jean Cohen had to hike his way as a fugitive. Considering his responsibilities as Chief of the Political Department and Information of the Zionist Executive, he was labeled as one of the most dangerous. In the years 1949-1950 the arrests of Zionist leaders amounted to hundreds. This was a consequence of the fact that the Zionist movement became a hindrance in the development of the Communist Party. The arrest of the Zionists was the result of the incapacity of CDE, unable to determine or find another way to liquidate the Zionist movement. The Communists needed badly the Jews, their energy, knowledge, professionalism, but they were not ready to say it loud. Nevertheless, they could not accept those who joined Zionism, and fought under its banner.

A great "help" in this direction was received from the Soviet Counselors, comfortably installed in all the compartments of the Romanian public life. They diligently advised how to rule the country by purging it of the opposition. Applied to the members of the old political parties, these methods were closely followed by CDE which took advantage of the schism between Zionists and especially among the leaders. A campaign organized against the emigration was unchained, but despite all of these, 150,000 Jews filled the forms asking for passports. The newspapers from abroad opened their columns writing about those who turned their back to

the Communist Party. A note published in "The Manchester Guardian" of August 16, 1948 wrote: "...Someone with strong connection with the Jewish International Organizations obtained news regarding the late changements in the leadership of the Jewish Communities in the new democracies (from the Eastern Europe). He found out that Rabbi Alexander Safran was fired (and expelled) from his position as Chief Rabbi of Romania; that Dr. Karel Stein, president of the Jewish Community from Prague was forced to resign; Dr. Hanne Rezek, Rabbi of the City of Prague was removed from his position:; Dr. Ernst Fischer was expelled from the Council of the Jewish Communities of Czechoslovakia. Although Dr. Emil Sommerstein a distinguished leader of the Polish Jewry, with relationship with the Lublin Committee and the Polish government preferred to leave Poland and resettle in the United States- Mr. Safran who is now in Geneva, affirmed that the Committee(Federation) of the Jewish Communities from Romania wasn't elected by the Jewish population, but it was installed by the communist authorities. Moses Rosen, the new Chief Rabbi was a former lawyer and activist in the Jewish Section (Evsectia) of the leadership of the communist party."

In the policy of "approchement" of the masses, the Soviet Councellors advised the communist leadership that keeping this in mind, the nationalist movements of all kind, should not be suppressed. They had to try to work with them in order to enlarge and solidify the small base of a party virtually without members, which could not represent a nation with its ideology or at least with the number of their members. The lull being removed, through the open gates of the party started to enter a large "variety" of

fascist elements. In order to give a broader understanding to this new and strange alliance, a meeting took place between Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu and Nicolae Patrascu, representing the leadership of the Legionary Movement. That was why Ana Pauker presumably appointed Alexandru Vojen, a staunch legionary, as her private secretary and former envoy to Roma.

Those facts had a disastrous effect on the Jewish population. Memories which didn't have the time to fade away, were brought back. The political trials against some personalities and perpetrators from the fascist movements, and those of historical parties were great shows staged in order to display in front of a puzzled population that the communist are fulfilling their promises. What appears clearly was the fact that those trials were set up against some individuals, and not against the political parties and their ideology. The fascist movement shortly after the war, folded their banners and kept them in hideouts waiting for better times, and sent their followers to join the communists. The old songs praising death and crime had changed the lyrics, and started to be sang at the beginning in a whisper and later on, loudly.

In the meantime the mass of the Jewish population consisted of little shopkeepers, craftsmen of all kind, and jobless intellectuals. In a word, a whole young generation who tried to find its path in an ocean of empty words. All looked passively to the CDE maneuvers and slowly understood that their place in the future was not there. The idea to emigrate became more powerful. As it was said, the anti-Semitical trend manifested after the

August 1944 coup became not just a reality, but affected profoundly the life of the Jewish people which by all means started to take a new turn. Everybody understood that this ideology was there to stay. The reasons should be found in the thesis of the communist party, entrusted to a society with old and powerful anti-Semitic trends.

The Zionist trials were organized in stages, each one differentiated by groups having their own ideology and ways to build the new life in Eretz Israel. The first trial brought in front of the Military Court in Bucharest were the "Revisionists," followers of Wladimir Jabotinsky's ideology of "self defense," and the youth organization known as "Betar." Among the leaders of those movements were Edy Kanner- sentenced to 12 years of hard labor- Sloma Sitnowitzer and others. The rank and file members, especially the youngsters from "Betar" were mentioned by name and they received tough sentences with long years in jail.

The second group, known as "the group of 42," among them were: Dr. Löevenstein-Lavy; engineer Sami Iakerkanner; Suzi Benvenisti(the wife of Misu Benvenisti); Rachel Mihailovici Cohen(Jean Cohen's wife); M. Rudich, M.H.Badi, Jean Cohen, and others.

The third group was not a compact one, representing a certain organization, but included distinguished personalities in the Zionist life. Among them, scholars profoundly preoccupied to collect and send to Israel Torahs and other illuminated old books for the new communities settled there, especially Jews originally from Romania. The President of the Court was general-major Justice

Alexander Petrescu, the same one who during the war sentenced the Zionists youth accused to be Communists, to heavy years in prison. Six of them were sentence to be executed by a fire squad, but three of them succeeded to go into hiding. During this trial, Alexander Petrescu, then a colonel, expressed his admiration for the attitude of the youngsters during the trials, and especially Misu Benvenisti's stand as witness and defendant. At this trial, wearing this time on his shoulders new golden stars acquired from the communists with the same kind of praiseworthy deeds, the former fascist prosecutor mentioned: "As we destroyed the fascism, we must destroy this obscure movement which calls itself Zionists." The tragedy of this scenario consists in the fact that the accused, despite the time passed over, were the same Jewish fighters and idealists; the prosecutors have been changed, but the decision makers were the same fascists, dressed in new uniforms.

It is important to be mentioned that among other Zionist leaders brought in front of the Court were some of those young paratroopers sent in 1944 by Haganah to Romania and other countries from East Europe with the assignment to send intelligence to Cairo, to the British Army, and help the Zionists from Romania in organizing their struggle of self defense, and emigration to Eretz Israel. After the war, some stayed in Romania working in the illegal emigration. Their heroic deeds were much praised at the time; for the same deeds they were sentenced by the communists because they fought against fascism in Romania.

Among those groups brought in front of the Court in different stages were those in charge with distribution of supply received

from the United States. This important action of salvaging the Romanian population from starvation wasn't looked upon with friendly eyes by the communist authorities. When the Zionist trials started, Dr. Cornel Iancu and his wife Dr. Mela Iancu in charge with the distribution of those supplies, were sentenced to 20 years in prison each. Another group of Zionists arrested were those people with connection with Israel's Embassy in Bucharest. Some members from the Embassy staff, as for example lawyer Gettler from Vaslui, was arrested in front of the entrance of the institution. The most important group was the one including the prominent leaders of Zionist movement: Berhard Rohrlich, A.L. Zissu, M. Benvenisti, T.H. Lavy, Dan Esanu and many others. In January 1944 almost the same leaders have been arrested by the state police and the Gestapo, but at that trial, they were all acquitted. In the years of the communist domination they were sentenced for life to hard labor. At the dreadful Canal Danube-Black Sea, the number of Jews augmented daily. Together with the Zionists, one could find legionaries, former members of the historical parties, and fascists of all kinds.

The newspapers from Romania kept their columns closed to those news and only some short informations got ahead. As an example the "Israelitisches Wöchen Blatt" of July 5, 1954 from Switzerland published a note regarding the Zionist trials. Among others was mentioned the fact that in this period of time was arrested and sentenced to 12 years Rabbi Miklos from Arad. After then, many Rabbis were arrested and sentenced to heavy years in prison.

For the first time was drawn a parallel between Zionism and Fascism. In the sentences applied to "the group of 42" was mentioned: "...they initiated, organized and took an active part in the activity of the Zionist Organizations of a fascist type in order to overturn the state order, all of them having in mind to abolish the popular democracy in our country." Acting in the same direction, the Court sentence against the Zionist leaders said: "...it was established that the accusers carried on an intensive work of organization, following directions from foreign associations by sending abroad intelligence regarding the economic status of the country."

Asked by the defense why the accused were so harshly punished the answer was clear: "...we did not bring them to trial and sentenced just for what they did; keeping in mind your ideology, you are locked here for what you would have done if we would have not arrested you at the right time."

Besides other forms of manifestations, the development of anti-Semitism in Romania had a "positive" one: the expansion of the Jewish nationalism in the deeper stratum of this population, especially the craftsmen, small shopkeepers, generally speaking the little bourgeoisie. In some stratum of Jewish intelligentia, financial circles and those with connections in the gentile upper-class, those sentiments were rejected as a betrayal of the Fatherland. Later on, due to the political evolution, those individuals or their scions, in other circumstances and determined by external pressures, turned their faces toward the Jewish masses. It was a kind of "marriage of convenience" where the

partners did not love each other, but in some respects, could use each other.

Over the years, in the bitter struggle to circumvent anti-Semitism, the Jewish population distinguished itself from the very beginning in the Zionist movement inside the country and abroad. A stroll in the old district of Basel-Switzerland, will follow old imprinted footsteps left by many people who over the years entered the modest structure in which shadows of those who organized the First Zionist Congress in 1897 are still there. People walked in silence, stopped for a while in front of yellowish photographs, whispering impressions with other companions, and left, leaving behind a world of struggle, dreams, and fulfillment. Among other pictures could be found those of Dr. Karpel Lippe (1830-1915) from Iasi, of Samuel Pineles (1843-1928) from Galati, being just a part of this delegation. The debates of the First Zionist Congress in Basel were opened by Dr. Lippe; Max Nordau in his maiden speech made an impressive presentation of the delegation from Romania, who brought with it petitions signed by 50,000 Jews asking the permission to emigrate to Eretz Israel. The visit at the Zionist Museum in Basel brought about unforgettable memories. A comparison between this modest but powerful structure where the struggle for life, dignity and against oppression started, and the magnificent Holocaust Museum in Washington, will be useful. Between those two monuments, the Jewish life in the last hundred years is woven with fibers of dream, blood, and tears.

In the big cities of Romania, or in obscure townlets, those Zionist organizations started the activity by focusing their

preoccupations in training for the life in Eretz Israel. In the meantime a big spectrum of newspapers, magazines, etc. started to be printed, fighting against anti-Semitism and preparing youngsters for their big jump over the space: the emigration! It was a great effort done in order to open an universe sealed for centuries to the Jewish masses bringing to them the Zionist ideal which became a lighting torch, in the darkness of their existence.

The appearance on the world maps of the State of Israel, constituted a great importance for the world Jewry, but one cannot say that all Jews from Romania who emigrated to Israel, were Zionists. The emigration of those idealists took place long ago, before the first World War, and before the Second World War. This last movement became a movement of salvation for so many who realized their status in the communist society: it was an emigration of those bitterly disappointed by the reality of life which all dreamed to be changed for better; it was the place of emigration of those old, tired, sick, weary after years of depravations, deportations, labor camps: those who looked toward Israel as their terminal place in a journey where they could live their last years in dignity, watching the new generation growing in the same time with the country. They emigrated mostly in Israel. Arriving on those shores they were welcomed by the "Law of Return" the most humanitarian and democratic piece of legislation, which after 2000 years of Diaspora said to its children: "Come in, you are one of us!" In this bleak midnight, the sun started to rise.

The great escape, this uprising which was the post-war emigration from Romania, showed to the Jewish masses, especially to the intellectuals, that after centuries of wandering, carrying on an existence without future, in a world of reject they started to learn that the only way to Jerusalem, was through emigration. In opposition with the benediction and powerful desire: "Next Year in Jerusalem," those emigrating made it possible to live it: each year, every month, every day, arriving from all over the world. This was the moment which put in motion the Jewish people from Romania who understood that "Freedom" doesn't rhyme with "Hatred" in any language of the world.

This reality could be better seen regarding the attitude toward Zionism. In Romania this movement was crushed with a violence and cruelty found nowhere else, besides Soviet Union. The fact that the Jewish masses perceived their adhesion to Zionism as a way to solve their insolvable problems, signed the sentence for the Zionist leaders and later dismembering the whole movement. Those exacerbated nationalistic-chauvinistic tendencies were a shrewd move made by the communist rulers in handling the psyche of Romanian masses. They saw in the "new policy" of circumventing the arrival of Jews in higher positions or just dismiss them from where they already were working. It was a first and powerful alarm signal not only for the Zionist leaders, but even for the communists- Jews still comfortably installed in the party's high ranking positions.

In this way a successfully anti-Semitic policy was promoted inside the country, and abroad becoming the flag bearer of the

"struggle" against Zionism. The incarceration of the leaders and rank and file members was done in order to demonstrate clearly this new trend. In the same time, those actions were meant to solve the political, social, and economical crisis, predominant at this specific time, the communists demonstrating that they didn't have any other solution at hand.

The perseverance with which Jean Cohen was pursued until he was arrested, should be looked as a part of the long struggle against this ideal. The references made to his person were done not just because he was an important personality, but what happened to him, happened to all other arrested Zionists. Finding out about the arrest of other leaders, and knowing fully the danger of returning back to Bucharest, Cohen started a long and dangerous "journey," stopping 2-3 days in every city, then hitting the road again. Eight months of desperate struggle to stay alive and even in those circumstances to be in touch with other leaders, eventually the ambassador of Israel in Bucharest. He was the artist painter Reuven Rubin, a Jew from Iasi, well known to Jean Cohen as well as to the older generations of artists and intellectuals. In one of the meetings, Cohen complained bitterly, having the feeling that the Israeli government didn't pay a damn for what happened to the Romanian Zionists. The answer was received much later!

This life as hunted beasts was hard, and the Romanian winter started to show its teeth. Jean Cohen decided to take all the risks, and returned home. In a kind of closet, he fixed a hiding place where he was able to hide in the eventuality that the

security police will check again. One night, in the late hours, six of them burst in, asking his mother to sign certain papers. She refused. Then, the policemen threatened to arrest Cohen's wife. Hearing all that and being aware of the threat, Cohen opened the door and gave himself up to the policemen who were astonished. It was an unexpected catch. In the same night started the first interrogatory under the direct supervision of the Minister of Interior, the famous general Alexandru Draghici. As soon as he arrived in front of his investigators, Cohen asked about his wife. Candidly they answered that she was already home. She was in another room in front of other investigators.

After then, four years of cross-examination followed. Day and night, each time at a different hour, and in another cell; a soup and a slice of old bread. Beatings, tortures were generously delivered! One day, in June 1954, Jean Cohen was awaked early in the morning. He was shaved and received a bundle with an over-worn suit and polished pair of shoes. At six o'clock he was already in the precincts of the Military Court. Other Zionist leaders were brought in with him. They looked to each other, and hardly recognized one another. It wasn't allowed to talk, but later everyone found out the reason which brought them there: it was the day of their trial. A man approached Jean Cohen telling him: "I'm your attorney," and left! They never talked to each other. When his turn arrived, the attorney stood up saying: "The facts are known. I am asking for extenuating circumstances." And sat down. A trial behind closed doors, where the media wasn't allowed in, needless to mention the absence of the foreign correspondents.

The whole Zionist's trial took half a day. The sentences were never released, and the accused did not know for how long they had to do their time. A few lines from the Jean Cohen prosecution: "...a chauvinistic Zionist from the early youth, was one of the founders, and the most revolutionary activist of the Jewish Party, of the Jewish Congress...One of the most important leaders of the Zionist Organization, of the Jewish Party, of "The Renaissance" (Movement); of the Jewish World Congress; of the "Unity" Intellectual Association, and a fellow member of the Federation of the Jewish Communities. Wrote numberless political and Zionist articles in the Jewish and Zionist media, with a nationalistic trend, a chauvinist Zionist and provocateur. He organized the action of Jewish Defense against the law abolishing the right of citizenship to the Jews. He had close relations with Dr. Filderman with whom he collaborated on the Jewish problems."

Later, much later Jean Cohen found out that he was sentenced to life of hard labor for: "...high treason and plotting against the state."

April 14, 1956 was a bright day. After almost six years of heavy detention, at dawn, somebody hit with his boot in the cell's door. Shortly twelve detainees, all Zionist leaders were standing in the courtyard of the prison. In front of each was a bundle with some shabby clothes, a piece of bread and a soap. They looked to each other and couldn't understand the moment. Was it really true? Were they free? Yes, it looked like! The voice of the officer sounded coming from far away: "That's it! It's over! Move fast, as fast as you can. And right to Palestine! The officer didn't joke!

They weren't absolved of their sentences, or after a new trial "acquitted," they were just evicted. It was like an echo from a late reality. Evicted. The Romanian leaders had an old practice of throwing their people over the borders. They did it many times in the past, and they do it nowadays too.

The liberation of the Zionist leaders and rank of file was obtained in stages, thanks to the intercession of the Jewish World Congress and the President Nahum Goldman. And of course with the "help" of the huge amounts of dollars paid for each person. "Liberty" was paid according to the "tariff." Selling Jews in Romania was nothing new. In 1726 the Jews from Onitcani-Bessarabia were accused by the villagers that they killed a Christian child, and from his blood they made the mazoth. The complaint was brought in front of the Prince Mihai Voda Racovitza. He was, according to the chronicles, a greedy man, looking always to make money, borrowing important amounts from the great landowners and the Jewish bankers and well known merchants, and never paid back his debts. Trying to show himself as "objective," he organized a mockery of a Court, later surnamed by anti-Semitic historians as a "Sanhedrin," a few Jews being included too. The Jews "Judges" from the Court said: "those who are guilty, to be punished according to their guilt." Regarding the whole "show" the old chronicler Neculce (1662-1742) wrote in his Annals: "there they arrested a few Jews, threw them in jail. As Jews, this time, they weren't tried as soon as possible. They kept them in prison, hoping to make some money after this." The Prince wrote a letter to the Jews from Istanbul asking for ransom money, threatening that the

accused Jews will be executed. The money were sent right away through a special messenger from the Vizir Court. It was the only way to save their life. In 1864 Prince Ioan Alexandru Cuza having always a good eye for the Jews, when trying to gave the country a Constitution, wanted to take advantage of the opportunity and to resolve once for all their citizen problem. He asked the Jews and Armenian communities for the amount of 40,000 golden ducats. The two delegations had a special meeting, but the Jews didn't come along. A rich Armenian paid the whole amount, and the citizen problem was resolved for them.

Crèmieux offered a loan of 25 million francs, but the government rejected the offer and didn't bestow citizenship to the Jews. And the treasure needed badly the money, in this specific period of time.

Marshal Ion Antonescu, like Adolph Hitler, had a visceral hatred against the Jews. They liked to rob the Jews of their money, properties and goods. Antonescu, using old but not forgotten experiences of spoiling Jews, did it in the new circumstances on a grand scale. The turn of the war didn't give him full leverage to fulfill his scam of selling Jews. Just a sizable chunk! His plan was elaborated in detail: first to sell the orphans from Transnistria; after them the older people; in line were the intellectuals; and the rest of other categories. The "inspiration" came from Gustav Richter, the representative of Eichmann in Bucharest, when the deportation of the Jews from Southern Transylvania and Banat was supposed to commence. What happened under the communists regarding this chapter of selling

the Jews, exceeded everything that was done in relation with the action of getting rid of this population.

In the night of July 17, 1956 an El-Al charter had a special cargo: Zionist leaders liberated from the Romanian jails. Somehow the flickering lights at the airport "Ben Gurion" welcomed them. It was late in the night. A crowd of Jews originating from Romania waited for them. Glasses were raised and each one wished to the other "L'Haim!" Not all those arrested succeeded to make their way to Israel. Just a few, to be remembered: lawyer Kiva Orenstein; former president of B'nei Brith died at the hands of his "investigators"; engineers Elias-Eliahu Schein; Hugo Nach; Abraham Iampolski and many others. In his way toward Israel, the young Abir Mark passed away in the plane. Many of those arrived, died soon because of serious illnesses caught in prisons. After two months A.L. Zissu died. Their bones were broken, their souls smashed. After their arrival in Israel, hospitals opened their doors to receive those human wreckages. Everybody paid a heavy price for their "passage" in Romania's jails.

In my ears still resounded the calm and profound voice of Jean Cohen talking to me about a time of wonderful idealism, when he was a powerful Jewish-Romanian intellectual who fought for his people until his last drop of energy. From time to time we are still "talking" together: the tape recorder kept our voices alive, and with great reverence I thank to the memories of this great humanist and Jew for the opportunity given to talk to me about a world vanished away, and which will never be the same.

In the fall of 1958, the High Holidays enjoyed a wonderful weather, with a sun of honey and the sweetness of fresh harvested grapes. People were waiting for the usual sermon delivered by the Chief Rabbi. But what he said nobody could understand. He said that everyone who wanted to emigrate, is free to go to the Police stations and fill out the form requested to obtain a passport. The news had the force of a bombshell. The idea of emigration from Romania received new dimensions. It wasn't just the fact that again the family had to leave from the places considered- for good reason- as belonging to them too. The Romanian politicians have played hard ball with those people's life, wanted again that the Jewish family become hostage. For each departure was put a ransom, always paid with hard currency. To make the gamble more difficult, the released passports were taken sometimes back just before departure, even in the airport lobby from one or two members of the family; the other having the <u>right</u> to leave (if they wanted). After old and extreme painful experience people preferred to stay together instead of departing with broken hearts. The facts were wearing gloves of velvet, but the force of the blows were felt bitterly.

The drama of this "second revolution" of the Jewish emigration was unfolded in a new magnitude especially in the decade '60-'70 with profound differences between the emigration of the "travelers" at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The news brought by the Chief Rabbi and spread by way of mouth, stirred deep the psyche of the Jewish population all over the country. The long lines of quiet but determined people were again

in place, this time in the late hours of the night in the fall of 1958; waiting for the offices of the Police Stations to open and to fill the forms in. The way in which was displayed this emigration, shows plainly that the approval of emigration wasn't a humanitarian gesture, understanding and especially appreciation of a long and heavy chain of sufferings to which the government- at last- ordered an end in a humanitarian way.

Everything was done in order to gain abroad political attention, approval and in the meantime looking for grabbing huge material profits. What was clear for everybody, was the fact that the Jews from Romania didn't leave the country pushed just by the desire to become rich- or not all of them- but to escape the anti-Semitic persecution and to be able to earn honestly their bread and butter. But the blows received by everyone in their different ways of life, the night arrests of the Zionist leaders, followed by the arrest of poor shopkeepers, craftsmen and intellectuals of all kind accused of sabotage of the national economy, which was considered equal to high treason, had a profound resonance in each family. The determination of emigration grew bigger and the desire to leave, hard rock. This state of facts dominated the thoughts of everyone, determining their future decisions. The idea of "collective guilt" was an accusation thrown in the face of the Jews for centuries. In those circumstances the Jews reversed it as a "collective responsibility": that if a Jew is suffering somewhere, the blows were felt by Jews everywhere.

People started to contact smugglers living near the borders, looking for hidden routes. Everyone using the most difficult

situations tried to squeeze over the borders, taking advantage of the darkness of the nights. Parents left behind with relatives their little children, being afraid that they'll be frighten by the dark forests and by crying, they will alert the border guards. It is any doubt that about this quiet exodus, the government was fully aware. Who could imagine that in those small cities and townlets along the Western borders, the sudden appearance of hundreds of people who stayed a day or two and disappeared over night, and that the local authorities didn't know their desire and especially their interest? The magnitude of this clandestine emigration at the Hungarian-Austrian borders overpassed all expectation. A few orders were released, and everything was frozen in the darkness of the border forests. Those caught were arrested, beaten, a few were shot, and the rest sentenced to hard work at the Chanel Danube-Black Sea. The Jewish problem was on its way to be solved in the Romanian forests! The Jewish Democratic Committee (CDE) acted joyfully after so many successes! The pressures were hard to be taken. To get rid of those nightmares, many people gave affidavits renouncing to emigration. An entire campaign of denying Judaism was unleashed and many tried to turn their back to their roots. But the majority, that hard core masses didn't give up! In front of the Police Stations people who asked for years for passports started to gather again, but the answer was always the same: "Not yet!" The resignation spread a thick lay of despair, and nobody was able to light the flickering lamp of hope.

It has been appreciated as the right moment when the "merchandise-Jews" could be "sold" on a higher bit. The government

wanted to make the most of this opportunity! The pressures exercised could be beneficiary in elevating the price of each individual, and to make the Jewish organizations from abroad to open their coffers, sending the much needed ransom-money. As a consequence, slowly but steady, Jews started to receive the approvals for departure. Besides all of those payments, a new levy was asked from each Jew. Those who "wanted" to give up the Romanian citizenship has to pay the amount of 1,000 lei for each person of the family. Everybody remembered the long struggle to receive the Romanian citizenship, and now to pay to give it up? The silent tombs from the Jewish cemeteries housing the heroes of the Romanian wars said: "don't do it!" Many didn't! Others gave everything they were asked for, just to leave as soon as possible!

In some European countries, in discreet offices, well groomed brokers met Romanian representatives, and shortly "the merchandise" back in the country, received the good news: "you can leave!" But still it wasn't enough! Those deals were done only with people who could afford to pay those large amounts of money. The masses were still nailed and were not able to make a move. After the Helsinky Conference in 1976, things suddenly brightened up. The little store transactions were replaced by wholesales, carried on by diplomats. The prices were steady and the flood of people without an end. Romania needed badly the most favored nation clause, and Jews were at hand. Always good to have some Jews around! Who knows? Could be useful. The Jews always sell well!

The movement toward the emigration could be appreciated not only by the multitude of the people gathered in front of the Police Stations in the cold nights of the fall of 1958, but especially by the inner structure of those quiet lines determined, unabatted and conscious of their responsibilities. People said: "enough is enough!" What was remarkable was the fact that those people were those who mostly joined the Communist Party after the "liberation." They emigrated looking for a better life, but this was still foggy in their perception. "Freedom," "Liberty" were still beautiful words, but they were concerned for their sustenance at the places of their arrival. The mass of those late emigrants was formed by the flower of the Jewish intellectuality, who worked brilliantly and with great results in the life of the country. But always appreciated as "Fellow Travelers!"

At the beginning of the century people raised in masse in a silent movement. They didn't want to change society, governments, political structure of the country. What they wanted was just to leave, and not to stay there anymore, at any price! At this later time - after the World War- this movement was a plebiscite which had the power of a revolution. Straight and dignified people, at any risks, turned their back to a regimen who lied to them, who made a mockery of their solemn promises.

These were circumstances in which the emigration started to be carried out in the sixth and seventh decade of this century. The departure of the Jews brought huge amounts of money in the dried up coffers of the Treasury, good public relations abroad, and a steady campaign of propaganda representing Romania as the

only one humanitarian country from the communist block because of its positive attitude toward emigration. But above all of this, strings worked successfully and the most wanted clause of the favorite nations was granted by the United States.

The Jewish emigration had an important impact in their internal policy. In the places where once Jews worked, the new "educated intellectuality" from the masses of workers and peasants wanted new positions, better houses for dwelling. The cities changed their structure of the population. A new social class raised its voice asking, or demanding everything for themselves. After the Jews left, behind them was a kind of "bonanza!" Jobs to be grabbed, houses in fashionable districts, furniture "bought" at a ridiculous price.

After a period of relative calm, the communist government struck blow after blow on those Jews who remained. It shattered the confidence of the people who had recently escaped from fascism to be threatened by communist ideology that had at the beginning preached justice for all. When the traditional organizations were banned, the most prominent leaders, those who had struggled courageously against fascism in order to save their people from destruction, had to leave the country in order to save their own lives.

From the government's point of view this Jewish mass desire to leave fitted perfectly with their plans: jobs and houses became available for the new Romanian intelligentia who were flooding into the cities after finishing their courses at the "workers universities." The new policy of promoting those who were sons and

daughters of the Romanian "elite" working class had created a kind of "super class" that while it waved the banners of communism, had also learned to enjoy the good life of the bourgeoisie which they professed to scorn, but secretly admired and imitated. Their scions, those "little princess" of the communist hierarchy grew up in a society where "Nepotism" was a way of life. Indulging themselves with the best education, and the most highly qualified professors- left their warm up nests for different reasons and using different routes settled for good in those "dreadful" capitalistic countries. Being sons and daughters of the great "dragons of communism" they were entitled to carry on, their passports. Between a trip abroad and short visits to the fatherland, they decided suddenly, or after a thorough "preparation" to become "political refugees." With connections already in place they played the role of "resistance fighters" against the political regimen which for each of them was just milk and honey. Shortly their pictures were printed with bold letters in the major newspapers, and on the little screen taught everyone about their life and sacrifices for the good of mankind. Becoming flag bearers of democracy, they started to visit Romania after Ceausescu was gone, remembering to everyone that they are the true patriots! Like once their fathers, or grandfathers waving the red flags of communism, they pretended to be the representatives of Romanian democracy.

Nevertheless, the magnitude of the solicitation of passports took everyone by surprise. Discontent was widespread, that even reprisals against those who had announced their desire to leave,

had little effect. Arab countries began to complain about the numbers of Jews coming from Romania to Israel, and their protests caused an economic boycott to be put in effect, and emigration was halted for a time. The jobs where Jews worked were already filled by others, leaving nothing available for them. Those few Jews who succeeded in finding work, were obliged to take much lower salaries, and often toil under humiliating conditions. Students were expelled from schools and universities, and the lines in front of the Police Stations were again in place. Between 1960 and 1965 around 35,000 Jews left the country, most of them through Vienna in an effort to calm down the Arabs and show them that the Jews were heading for America and not for Israel.

Antonescu started to sell "his" Jews in order to cleanse the territory and preserve Romanianism. What he had done was only a trifle compared with the organized wholesaling of Jews that was supervised by the Communist Party- the party that had preached equality for everyone.

The cleansing of the territory, that old dream of scores of anti Semites, has been fulfilled. Most of those who were not killed during the Holocaust, have emigrated. Now, there are perhaps 10,000-14,000 Jews in entire Romania. Most of these are old, some are partners in mixed marriages living outside Jewish traditions, and other have no families or friends to sponsor them in another country. Their children, those still there, will surely find a way to leave.

Yet, anti-Semitism is still strong in the Romania of today. Looking around one can find the same court jesters, court poets,

crawlers, and boot lickers who made a good living under the communists. They still write slanderous articles about the Jews with the same dedication and fervor as their predecessors. They are the communists of yesterday, and the patriots of today- always acting as benefactors of the nation.

Chapter 6
Post Scriptum

A PLEA FOR THE LAST JEW IN ROMANIA

We almost bumped into each other, and when I saw him I could not believe my eyes.

"Is it really you?" I asked overwhelmed by the chance encounter. He answered with the same smile I remembered from years before, and his voice still had the quiet calm of a good hearted man.

"As you can see, It is I. But you, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, just poking around for awhile."

This was far more than an ordinary encounter. That I had found him, the last Jew in Romania, caused in me a state of emotion, a kind or joy, which I couldn't understand.

We sought out a lonely bench in the park, and once seated there we looked at each other in silence as if we had already said all we were supposed to say. But a question came from me, "Are you really the single Jew left living in Romania from the splendid, flourishing, and thriving community that was once here?" He looked up at the trees for a moment as if considering their height, and then with a certain hesitation turned toward me and said, "Yes, I am the one."

"What do you do for a living?", I asked.

"Thanks for asking," he responded, "as a matter of fact, I do nothing and I'm paid for it."

That seemed beyond my comprehension so I asked yet another question, "How is it you are paid for doing nothing?"

He smiled and replied as if he were telling a joke, "They need me."

"How can they need you? You are alone, old..."

"See, that's just the reason. They still need someone who can be sworn at, humiliated, receive their wrath and scorn, and who will never protest or ask to be treated like other human beings. They did it to our ancestors for centuries, but they raised their voices sometimes. Now I have a deal with them, they deride me in their newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets, and I keep silent and pretend not to notice. I've been doing it for years, I'm doing it now, and I don't give a damn what others think about my job."

I tried to think of a response, but was speechless for a moment. Finally I dared to say, "I suppose you are handsomely paid." But as I said the words I saw the worn suit, his tired features, and his sad eyes, and I could guess what his response would be. "You ask about wages? You know they never pay a Jew as much as others. Why do you even ask? But I only need money for basics."

Again I paused, gazing at a lonely man. "You look poor, very poor," I finally commented. He began to laugh, "Not at all, you are mistaken. I am so rich I hardly know what to do with all my wealth."

He seemed normal in his looks, but everything he said was beyond my understanding. "Rich? Have you looked in a mirror? Have you seen a doctor lately?"

Again he laughed, "You think I'm crazy, don't you? Well, don't worry, I am in my right mind."

He seemed a bit agitated and his voice was harsh, but I didn't pay attention to that. "You live unnoticed. You are dressed in rags that should have been cast away long ago. You exist on the fringes of a society that ignores you. And you claim to be rich?"

"I do not merely claim it, I am rich! I am the heir. Do you understand? I am the last legitimate Jew in Romania. I am the only one to inherit the wealth of that wonderful community which has disappeared from this land. We built plants and craft shops. During trips around the countryside I like to stop in the small towns and look at church steeples- all covered with tinned iron plates that were done by Jewish tinsmiths. That was hard work and took great skill, but they were the only ones who knew how to do it- and always for little money. Those nearly forgotten Jews contributed to the settling of the country in a period when there were large empty tracts of land between the villages and the cities. I like to stop in those places to search for their builders and tradesmen- but they have vanished without a trace." He paused and then said, "Go and seek out these places, they are part of our heritage."

"What can I see there now," I asked.

"Only traces of them, but that is still enough. Do you understand?"

Our Jewish people laid down the cornerstone of trade and opened up the borders for local goods to compete in foreign

markets. We played our part- despite all the denials- by enhancing the name of Romania and its prestige. We wrote books in which pages were planted the seeds of knowledge that show the path toward compassion. We studied with dedication how to be at peace with the world around us, and everything we built in this country flourished. We spent months and sometimes years of our lives in labs searching and researching. We were the doctors at the bedsides of the sick, the engineers, the architects, the accountants, the lawyers. We tried so very hard to bring light to the darkness and were at hand in times of need and distress. But always-always- we were denied any credit for our part in the construction and reconstruction of our country.

My friend looked very tired, but a kind of determination could be seen on his features, "We were able to build houses, but not the hopes that make them stay alive."

"That is the reason people left."

"You're right, but that is only a part of the story. Can you picture this- farm lands as far as you can see, vineyards covering hills, rich forests on the slopes of the mountains, ships of all sizes roaming the seas, lakes and ponds, factories with unheard of production- everything that belonged to the Jews spoiled and an entire population squeezed to the bone. And I'm not counting those who were deported from Bessarabia and Bukovina. I didn't keep track of their gold, coins, Jewelry- rings from the fingers of the engaged and from the fingers of the old. Did I mention the rare stamp collections, exquisite paintings, or antique furniture which 'disappeared' after the pogroms and deportations?"

I had a question: "Staying here, did you ever find out who did these things? By the way, do you remember the pianos?"

With bitterness he replied, "The pianos! How could I forget them! Those who returned from the "liberated" territories brought with them many items, including rugs and pianos, and through their windows could be heard delicate sonatas being played on those "spoils of war."

I tried to stop him then, but he went on like a litany, "I feel uneasy, as if the books written by Jewish scholars that are housed in the libraries, and the tombs in the cemeteries are gazing at me through their tragedies. Those books and tombstones ask me why they have been left here alone. The books have been forgotten, their authors' names are never mentioned, and the stones are being smashed so no one can read the names on them."

"They are offended by our heritage?"

"Maybe that is so. A good memory is not their strongest point. They find forgetfulness more to their liking." But with both the good and the bad, everything that is left is mine. I am the heir- the true heir, and the country's rulers have to give me my rights. I am the heir. I know where every part of my inheritance is. Just walking the streets, all over the country, I can recognize the houses built and once owned by Jews, along with all their properties. And there is something else which I carry on my shoulders as a heavy burden, the sufferings of all of them. For those I am the heir as well." He looked at me and began to laugh anew, and again I asked myself about his sanity.

"Do you know, anyone else on God's earth who is the heir of almost eight hundred thousand Jews and everything they possessed? Here that is what I am, and as long as I live here I am a mute but unforgettable beneficiary, witness, and prosecutor. I am the reminder that they must pay back- to the last penny- for everything that was spoiled. Do you think that is not fair? Well, think again. There can be no price for the lost lives and human suffering. The survivors emigrated with just what they could carry in their hands, leaving everything else behind with those who brag about the benevolence they showed to the Jews when they asked to emigrate. It was a deal for which the Jews paid heavily.

He looked exhausted and was silent. Then he whispered, "The hard time is during the Shabbats and Holidays. You know I wasn't a religious person although I never denied my Jewishness. But these days I feel the urge to be a little closer to God. I go to the synagogue, but the synagogues all over the country are empty- like our souls. In them there is only dust and sadness, yet I sit in a corner and see shadows of those who have departed entering to sit in their seats. After them come the ghosts of those who were killed. It's hard to look at them, at their empty eyes, at their faces on which can be read great suffering, at their slow pace with many pauses to look back to see if they are followed. They are a countless army, and the synagogues are no longer empty. I can even hear the voices of the cantors and the murmurs of the prayers. I go from one synagogue to the next, and in each I find the same shadows and ghosts. They have all died and no one remains

to say a kaddish for their souls. The only one alive is me-maybe."

It was getting late. The park had emptied and the man announced, "I have a job to do."

"What kind of job?"

"Today is the day when they publish their anti-Semitic papers and magazines and I have to read what they wrote about me this time."

As he left, I ran after him and caught his arm. "Just a moment. I have to ask, what about you? One day, you know, you'll die too. God forbid, but this is a part of life. Who will take care of you? You know, the grave, the last walk to the cemetery, who will do it? And who will deliver the eulogy for the last Jew in Romania? Tell me!"

"Don't worry. Everything is taken care of. The people will do it. The same Romanians who saved so many Jews from destruction during the Holocaust. They will take care that the last Jew in Romania has a decent funeral. They owe me that much."

"And after that, after you're gone, what will happen? Who will take care of your heritage?"

"Don't worry my friend, somehow they'll buy another Jew. They can't live without us, you know."